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JANUARY

DARE-DEVIL ACES



BLACK VENGEANCE THE **EYE OF DOOM**
by R. SIDNEY BOWEN by C. M. MILLER
ALSO WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN, O. B. MYERS, WM. HARTLEY ETC.

NOW LISTEN, LARRY —YOU CAN'T BACK OUT!



GOSH - WHY DIDN'T I
THINK OF IT BEFORE - IF
THOSE PIMPLES ARE ALL
THAT'S HOLDING OFF
LARRY - I KNOW WHAT
I WILL FIX 'EM!



HEY! TAKE IT FROM
ME LARRY—THESE
YEAST CAKES ARE
SLICK STUFF TO

FINISH OFF
PIMPLES—JUST
YOU START
EATING 'EM
RIGHT OFF!



GEE CHARLIE -
YOU SURE ARE
ONE SWELL
GUY!



LATER
HEY CHARLIE—TAKE
A SQUINT AT MY FACE—
THAT FLEISCHMANN'S
YEAST WORKED



WELL I TOLD YOU IT
WOULD CHASE THOSE
BLOSSOMS—DIDN'T I?

SAY - WHAT'S BITING
YOU? YOU'RE NOT
SERIOUS ABOUT
NOT BEING IN
THE SHOW, ARE
YOU?

PIMPY FACE?
NOT MUCH!



READ
HOW
LARRY'S
PIMPY
FACE
ALMOST
MADE
HIM QUIT
THE SHOW

LARRY'S A WIZ
WITH THAT
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DARNED GLAD
I SOLD HIM ON
THOSE YEAST
CAKES



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BLACK



The hand of Death was on the 84th when Tex Dickey took command, his aim to prop with his personal courage the sagging guts of a squadron. But locked are the coals of hate in the twisted soul of Muller—the last of a bloody trio!

VENGEANCE

by ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN

CHAPTER ONE

Yellow Wings

COLONEL BAKER, commanding officer of the Second Corps Area Wing, tapped the rubber end of the pencil on the desk to emphasize each and every word.

"The picture is simply this," he said to the big-boned, square-jawed pilot seated opposite him, "Eighty Four Squadron is getting the living daylights blasted out

Four goes out on patrol they come back minus one man. And, I might add, right now the squadron is exactly eleven pilots short of full strength. In other words, eleven ships and planes lost in four days!"

As the senior officer paused, "Tex" Dickey leaned forward in his chair and painstakingly snubbed out the cigarette he was smoking.

"That's a lot of ships and pilots to lose,"

He sent the Yellow Fokker rocketing forward.



of them by the Ninth Fokkers, led by some crack German pilot who flies an all yellow plane. Who he is, Intelligence hasn't been kind enough to find out for us yet. However, his identity is not important. What is, is that very time Eighty

he said slowly. "Those Fokker pilots must be good."

"That's just the point!" the colonel said sharply. "From what I've been told they are just average. It's their leader who seems to be the whirlwind. He's the one

who's been doing all the killing. The others just cut some poor devil out of the formation, and then he goes down and finishes the job."

Tex grunted, and one corner of his mouth went down in a scornful grimace.

"The old von Richthofen stunt, eh?" he echoed. "Trying to build up a record? Well, von Richthofen got his eventually, and the Germans don't turn 'em out any better than he was."

"Granted," the other nodded. "But in the meantime, Eighty Four is—well, let's say its morale isn't exactly what the morale of an active service unit should be."

"Major Tracey will take care of that," Dickey broke in with a grin. "I served under Tracey when we were both with the French. I know him better than any one in France."

"Major Tracey is dead! He crashed in flames behind the German lines, last evening!"

The words brought Tex out of his chair like a shot.

"Tracey—Jim Tracey is *dead*?" he choked out.

"Yes! He was the yellow Fokker's latest victim. That is expressly the reason why I sent for you, Dickey. You knew Tracey well. In many ways you are like him—hard, a fighter, a man who will finish anything he starts. But for your penchant to raise your own particular brand of hell when on leave, you would have been made a squadron commander long before this. Yes, I'm making you one, now. A temporary command, at least. Eighty Four used to be the top notch unit in France. It's falling apart because of this damned yellow Fokker pilot. My God, you'd think he hypnotizes his victims, he seems to get them with such ease!"

Dickey only half listened. His thoughts were racing back over the months to the

days when he and Jim Tracey had played give-and-take with Fokker pilots for the glory of *La Belle France*. Times too innumerable to recount they had spat in Death's eye together and got away without a scratch. And at other times they had taken Paris apart to see what made it tick. At a fight, or a frolic, they had been a two man team set to go at the drop of the hat.

Uncle Sam sticking his fist into the war had parted them. They had gone to different Yank squadrons. And, to a certain extent, gone different ways. Tracey had climbed right up to a squadron commander. Tex had got as far as a captain, and let it go at that. In one department though, they had both remained the same. They had continued to enthusiastically slap hell out of anything German that could fly.

And now, Jim Tracey was dead!

Dickey shook himself, glanced at the colonel.

"Eh, sir?" he echoed. "You say you want me to take over Eighty Four?"

"That's what I said. Take full command. I'll back you in anything reasonable. But I want you to whip Eighty Four back into shape. Smash this yellow Fokker buga-boo that seems to have the survivors under its spell! It may be just crazy imagination as the result of the strain of the damn war. I don't know. But I do know that we can't afford to let Eighty Four collapse completely. They are brave lads, good pilots, and fighters. If this thing can crack them, it can also crack other squadrons. You get my point?"

"Perfectly," Tex nodded, and stood up. "The Air Service may be heading for a bad case of the jitters. Okay, sir! And I'll promise you one thing, at least. I may not get to first base straightening out the busted morale of Eighty Four, but, by

God, I'll get the dirty tramp who killed Jim Tracey! And you can kiss the book on that!"

Colonel Baker looked at him steadily for a second or so.

"Do *that*," he said, "and I've a feeling the other part of your job will take care of itself. Alright, Dickey. As of this moment you are acting C.O. of Eighty Four. My car is outside. Corporal Sharron will drive you down. You can make it in an hour. No time like the present to get started. And, yes, good luck—a barrel full of it!"

EXACTLY forty six minutes later, Corporal Sharron zoomed the colonel's Winton-Six over the crest of the low hill, and sent it thundering down the shell pocked road on the other side. Directly ahead, less than a quarter of a mile from the base of the hill, was a triangular patch of level ground that served as the home drome of the Eighty Fourth Pursuits. Eyes squinted against the rush of air that piled over the slanting windshield, Tex studied his new war "home" and found very little lacking. That is, it looked the same as any airdrome in France, so it should be alright.

Lined up on the tarmac were four or five round-snouted Bentley Camels. A couple of grease-balls lounged against the corner piece of one of the three camouflaged Bessenau hangars. But they constituted the only visible signs of active, and inactive, humanity.

Shifting himself in the seat, Tex suddenly stiffened and cocked his eyes upward. A split second later his eyes confirmed the acuteness of his ears. At about five thousand feet, and just under some drifting cloud scud, a lone Yank Camel was being put through routine loop, roll, and split-arc maneuvers.

"Must be testing his crate," Tex mut-

tered as he watched a very sloppy half-roll. "Or maybe its just practice. He sure needs—"

"Lord, Captain, what's *that*?"

Dickey had spotted it a split second before the words burst from the corporal's lips. A streak of yellow had suddenly zipped down out of the cloud scud. It was just a yellow streak at first, but on second glance he saw the unmistakable lines of a Mercedes Fokker. In nothing flat it dropped down on the lone Camel's tail. Tex held his breath, waited for the savage yammer of Spandaus guns.

He heard none, however. That is, not until the Camel heeled wildly over on one wing, and started to tear off to the left. Then came the sounds of the Spandaus, faint and strangely muffled by the height.

"Missed him!" Tex shouted as he saw the dim gleam of tracers dart past in front of the Camel's nose. "Rotten shot! Cut back on him, Yank! Cut . . ."

The last froze in his throat. As though it had suddenly run smack into an invisible brick wall, the Camel dipped sharply by the nose. Engine over-revving, wires howling in the terrified rush of air, the American plane tore earthward straight as an arrow. With an ungodly impact, it hit on the opposite side of Eighty Four's drome. There was the dull, blood-chilling *krunk* of the plane striking, a cloud of dust, and then a great sheet of yellow-orange flame that leaped heavenward. Snapping his eyes upward from the blazing wreck, Tex saw nothing but cloud scud and a few dabs of clear blue sky. The yellow Fokker had disappeared as quickly as it had come.

"Step on it!" Dickey barked at the pop-eyed corporal. "Get this damn wagon down there, pronto! My God, look at those bloody fools! They're running around like headless rabbits!"

The "bloody fools" were the pilots and

mechanics of Eighty Four Squadron. As though by magic they had appeared on the tarmac and were running around in all different directions, and getting nowhere. Bracing himself against the terrific burst of speed that the corporal teased out of the Winton, Tex fixed his gaze upward for any sign of the yellow Fokker. There was none, however. The plane was gone for good.

A moment or so later, the corporal skidded the car to a halt on Eighty Four's drome. The stampede had quieted down considerably. A couple of the pilots were in the pits of their ships and motioning to dazed eyed grease-balls to swing the props. The others, though, were clustered together in a group. And as Dickey climbed down from the car and walked toward them he saw dumbfounded wonder and half stunned fear stamped on every face.

As though Dickey's approach was a sort of release valve for pent up emotions, a youthful tow-head suddenly let go and started hammering his two fists together.

"He got Joe!" he screamed. "Another one—that's twelve! Any of us here may be the next. Oh God . . . I can't stand it!"

In a single leap Dickey reached him and grabbed him by the back of the neck. With the flat of his other hand he swung hard. His palm made a smacking sound against the tow-head's cheek.

"Snap out of it!" he barked. "Catch hold! Who the hell do you think you are? Cut it out!"

The wild look fled from the youth's eyes. He shivered and stared stupidly at Dickey's granite hard face.

"Who . . . who are you?" he managed to choke out.

Tex swept them all with steel grey eyes.

"The name is Dickey!" he chopped at them. "Your new C.O. Now, into the mess, everybody. After the first drink, you can all get it off your chests!"

CHAPTER TWO

Return of the Dead

PUTTING his empty glass down on the table, Dickey cleared his throat, and jammed both hands in his tunic pockets.

"Alright, shoot!" he grunted at the sulen eyed group. "Let's hear everything there is to tell. One at a time. But before you begin, get this! Major Tracey was the best friend I had in the world. I'm here to carry on for him. Letting me down will be the same as letting him down. And, I've got a hunch you wouldn't want to do that."

Tex jabbed his finger at a heavy set, wind bronzed pilot. "What's your name?" The other's eyes flickered with faint anger.

"Tucker," came the tart reply. "Senior flight leader. I've been in charge since the Major was shot down. Incidentally, I've received no word about a new C.O."

"You're receiving it, now," Tex told him evenly. "Alright, Tucker, what do you know about this mysterious yellow Fokker? You've scrapped it?"

"No. You don't scrap *him*! You can't get close enough. He's always ringed by his damn pilots. He's—he's clever!"

"The clever ones can go down in flames, same as the dumb ones!" Tex grunted. "But what's so mysterious about this bird? I understand he waits for his gang to cut a Camel out of formation, and then goes down. Mean to tell me he out maneuvered Major Tracey, and shot him down?"

The other shrugged.

"I wasn't on that patrol," he said. "But you saw what happened just now. His tracers were missing Joe Kennedy's nose by yards, yet Joe went down, and burst into flames. That's the way they all have gone."

"The Major, too!" spoke up the young tow-head Tex had smacked. "I saw him. It—it was like magic, honest! The Major

was cutting away from him, when suddenly he fell forward against his instrument board. His ship went into a dive and he never came out of it. It—it was horrible!"

The youth started shaking. Tex reached over and gripped his arm.

"Better have another shot of that cognac, son," he said quietly. "Take a good one."

Turning back to the group, the new C.O. stared at them a moment.

"We're all going out on patrol in an hour," he said. "I'll lead. If we run into this yellow buzzard and his gang, stick close to me. Don't do a damn thing until I give the signal. We'll sort of ring ourselves for awhile, and see what happens."

"That's ridiculous! It'll only end up by us losing one more!"

Tex eyed Tucker's flushed face. The big pilot had a stubborn set to his lips. Dickey could read his thoughts like an open book. The man, as senior pilot in the squadron, resented an unannounced stranger taking over his command. Military jealousy was another definition of the same idea.

"You can stay on the ground, if you want to, Tucker," Dickey said softly.

The man's flushed face became a brilliant crimson. He doubled his big ham-like fists, and the cords of his neck showed white under the skin.

"I'll do my job with the rest!" he grated. "The point I'm making is, who the hell are you to give orders—to send some poor devil to his death? You don't outrank me. I'm a captain, too, and I say to hell with you!"

Dickey rose slowly and stepped over to the man.

"Check, Tucker," he said steadily. "I don't outrank you, as far as *rank* goes. And maybe I'm just telling fairy tales when I say I was sent down here to take over command of this outfit. But it hap-

pens to be the truth. I'm here for two reasons. One to snap you lads up a bit,—and the other, to get the dirty rat who killed Tracey. Play ball my way, and maybe we'll get some place. Be stupid, and we'll have trouble, instead."

"You're damn right we'll have trouble!" the big pilot roared. "And here's some for a starter!"

An iron fist, as big as a balloon, rushed through the air toward Dickey's jaw. It was a blow that would have felled an ox, but it didn't send Dickey sprawling—didn't for the very simple reason that it didn't connect. Shifting his weight, the new C.O. half pivoted and rolled with the punch. When the fist was well past his ear he hung up with his left and buried it a good three inches in Tucker's bread basket. Air burst from the man's lips and he half bent over. Tex's right whipped up to the jaw and stopped the bending movement. In fact, it bent Tucker over the other way and stretched him out flat on the mess floor. Without so much as giving the man a second look, Tex turned back to the others.

"Anybody else wonder whether I'm supposed to be the C.O. of this gang?" he snapped.

MARKED silence, and lots of it, greeted him. Walking over to the mess bar he picked up a pitcher of ice water, splashed its contents down into Tucker's face, and set the pitcher on the table.

"A bad beginning," he grunted, "but it couldn't be helped. Now listen to me, fellows, I've been around this man's war a long time. A darn sight longer than any of you here, I imagine. But I have yet to see a Fokker that can't be brought down. Maybe the kid, there, is right. Maybe it is some kind of magic; some slick trick that has you all buffaloeed. But in the pit of that Fokker is a man, a *human being*—not a ghost! Just plain *man*! And bullets

will rip his hide just as easily as the next lad's. Our job is, first—to work as a unit, not like a bunch of scared sheep. Second, we've got to find out what trick this bird pulls, *if* it is a trick. And last, we've got to co-operate with each other! Now tell me this, have any of you got a good look at him?"

"No!" a redhead cried. "You can't! He wears something like a mask over his face!"

"A *mask*?" Tex echoed harshly. "You mean he's acting the Masked Marvel of the air, or—?"

Tex stopped short and whipped up his hand in a signal for silence. The gesture was unnecessary, however. Even as his hand went up, every man in the room, save Tucker, heard the high keyed throbbing note of a Mercedes engine coming down in a power dive. A split second later a hoarse voice from out on the tarmac announced the type of plane powered by the Mercedes. It offered more information than that.

"Fokker coming! Man the ground pit guns! Oh my cripes, it's *him* again!"

Before the last word had died, Tex was barging out through the mess door at top speed. The instant he hit open air he twisted his head and looked up toward the east. Unconsciously he slowed up his mad dash that was intended to take him to the nearest Camel on the line. A snub-nosed, all yellow Fokker was less than two thousand feet over the east edge of the field, and coming down hell-bent. The angle of the dive, and its direction—toward the center of the drome—told Tex instantly that the pilot had no straffing ideas in mind.

Pulling up to a complete halt he stood still, eyes riveted on the diving ship. By now the surrounding hills, and seemingly the sky itself, echoed and re-echoed the thunderous howl of the over-revving Mercedes.

"God, he's going to dive in!" gasped a strained voice in back of Dickey. "He can't pull out! He's too low!"

The next second made a bum guesser out of the speaker. With less than three hundred feet to go the Fokker leveled off, tilted its nose and went thundering straight toward Heaven. However, before it started up, Tex's narrowed eyes spotted two things. One was the type of helmet the pilot wore. It covered his head and face completely, with the goggles seemingly an integral part of the whole. And the other was a yellow and red message container that arced out from the pit.

Breaking into a sprint, Tex beat everyone by a good ten yards to the spot where the message lighted. Tearing open the buttoned flap at the bottom, he fished in a thumb and forefinger and pulled out a folded sheet of paper. Eyes popping, he read the scrawled words on the outside.

For Captain Dickey
Please Hold For Arrival

Thoughts spinning, Tex smoothed out the sheet and read the complete message.

My dear Captain Dickey:

Through the courtesy of our Intelligence service I have been informed that you are to be made the commanding officer of the Eighty Fourth Squadron, to take the place of the late Major Tracey, whom I had the extreme pleasure of killing yesterday evening.

Naturally, to learn that you are to succeed him is news of a most welcome sort. As you will recall, there was a time when we met frequently in the air. And you will also recall that you, and the late Major Tracey, were responsible for the deaths of my two younger brothers. I swore then that you both would pay for that day, and now it appears that my full wish will come true.

One of you I have already killed. There remains only you, Captain. And good fortune has at last brought you within reach. Up to now, for reasons of my own, I have kept my identity a secret. However, circum-

stances have changed that. I want you, in particular, to know who killed you.

Frantz von Mueller

DICKEY read the letter through twice, then stared fixedly at the signature as a long line of events flashed across the screen of his memory. Frantz von Mueller! It was like the dead coming to life again. Way back in '16 the name von Mueller was the curse of the French Flying Corps. The Three Black Devils, the French pilots used to call them. Frantz, Karl, and Ludwig, all members of the same German staffel, whose insignia was the von Mueller coat of arms.

Not for their flying did the French name them the Three Black Devils. But rather for what they *did* when flying. Always on patrol together, they never engaged in a fight in which they didn't outnumber their opponents by at least one plane. And most of the time they played sky jackals; swooping down on some lone helpless French pilot with a dead engine, or incapacitated by wounds that rendered him incapable of putting up any kind of a fight. Also, balloon observers jumping to safety by parachute, after their bags had been fired, were special meat for the von Mueller brothers. Wing to wing they would rush down on the poor devil swaying at the end of parachute shroud lines, and riddle his body with Spandaus bullets before he could reach the ground.

When the von Mueller brothers went out on patrol in their jet black Fokkers, with the coat of arms in white on the sides of the fuselage, they went out to slaughter whatever, and whenever they could. Not, by any manner of means, to battle an enemy pilot man to man, and tough luck to the loser. "Anything for a kill," seemed to be their motto. And although it was not generally known, outside of a couple of crack squadrons, the French Government had offered a handsome reward of blood money to the pilot, or pi-

lots, who permanently removed the von Mueller brothers from the war and, better still, from the world.

And then had come the day when Tex Dickey and Tracey had suddenly chanced upon the Black Devils sneaking home from a balloon pilot slaughter. Trapped, the von Muellers had been forced to fight. It had been a furious battle that thousands on both sides of the lines had watched. And those thousands of spectators had seen three ruthless killers go hurtling earthward. Two of them in flames, and the third out of control.

In time, complete information had filtered through to the French lines. It was to the effect that brothers Karl and Ludwig had been the "flamers." And that brother Frantz had been dragged from his crashed plane terribly injured, but still alive. For their achievement, the French had given Dickey and Tracey a hat full of medals and the blood money reward. The medals they had kept. But the money they had immediately turned over to the French War Orphans' Fund. Six months later the Three Black Devils were so much forgotten history, shoved into oblivion by more recent killings and enemy atrocities.

"But he's back! And *he* killed Jim!"

Dickey muttered the words aloud. Half turning, he stared toward the east. His face became a cold mask of ice, and his eyes narrowed to pin-points of white flame. Suddenly he swung around to the others who were standing there.

"Who has the best plane in the squadron?" he snapped. And when they hesitated, "Speak up, dammit!"

A pilot pushed forward a step or two.

"I guess mine's the best, Skipper," he said. "At least, I've got a brand new Bentley in it, and—"

Dickey cut him off with a nod.

"Right!" he barked. "I'll take yours. The patrol is off, unless I get back in

time. You, Sergeant, get a couple of men on that plane at once! Full tank and gun belts! Send somebody else for a sector map showing the location of the Ninth Fokkers' field. I'll be ready to take off in fifteen minutes. Get the lead out of your pants! *Move!*"

CHAPTER THREE

Sky Trouble

AS the sergeant and the grease-balls went legging back to the hangars, Dickey swung on his heel and sprinted over to the squadron office. It took him a couple of minutes to write a few sentences on a blank sheet of paper. Then stuffing it in the message dropper von Meuller had tossed down onto the field, he buttoned the pocket flap and went out to the tarmac.

The prop of his plane was already ticking over. One grease-ball had just completed filling the tanks and two others were making final adjustments on the guns and ammo belts. Climbing into the pit, Dickey waved the grease-balls clear for a moment and ran up the engine. Revs, oil pressure, and temperature were all okay. He eased back the throttle and nodded to one of the grease-balls.

"Okay!" he yelled. "Yank the cho—!"

He didn't finish the rest. At that moment, he suddenly noticed that his prop was not the only one ticking over. The Camel at the far end of the line was being made ready for flight. And Tucker was sitting in the pit! In a flash Dickey was out of his ship and down the tarmac to the other plane.

"Where do you think you're going?" he barked at the big pilot.

Tucker gave him a blazing stare.

"Wherever you are, Dickey!" he grated. "Until word comes through from Wing, I'm still in charge of this squadron. And I'll fly as I damn well please. Go on, be

the tough hero for the others! You're not fooling me any!"

Without a word Dickey reached into the pit and snapped off the ignition switch. Then he jabbed a stiff forefinger against the big pilot's chest.

"Listen, Tucker," he said in a flat voice, "I haven't got time to argue with you! This thing's personal with me, now. And you can keep to hell out of it. That's final, see? When I get back we'll have it out, once and for all. But until then, park here, and *stay parked!*"

Rage choked the other so he couldn't get a word past his lips. Swinging around, Dickey sprinted back to his ship, legged in, waved the chocks away, and banged the throttle open. Five seconds later he lifted the ship clear and went arcing up and around toward the east. At four thousand he leveled off, let the throttle stay wide open and twisted around in the seat and glanced down at Eighty Four's field. A Camel was streaking across the small drome. Tex didn't have to use field glasses to know who was in the pit.

A harsh curse spilled from his lips, and he started to rap the stick over and bank around. On impulse, though, he checked the movement and grinned faintly.

"You've got guts, anyway, Tucker!" he grunted. "Damned if maybe I couldn't sort of like you, Okay, tag me, if it'll make you feel better. We can go to the mat later."

Twisting front, he pulled the sector map from the pocket of his sidcot suit and checked it with the ground marks below his wings. He changed his course a hair and headed straight for the home drome of the Ninth Fokkers. As he slipped across No Man's Land and prop-clawed into German air, enemy archie gunners woke up and went through the motions of sending up an aerial barrier. As in every ten cases out of ten it was just a

waste of perfectly good ammunition. And Dickey kept right on going.

When finally he sighted the Ninth field oozing up over the distant horizon, he twisted in the seat again and glanced back. Tucker was there right behind him. Across the airspace Tex could see the savage look of stubborn determination on the big pilot's face.

"Yeah, guts alright!" Tex murmured, and turned front. "And the bird was just as scared as the others, too. Maybe my sock knocked some of it out of him."

With a shrug he dismissed Tucker from his mind, slanted the Camel down in a long dive and went hell-bent toward the German field. Narrowed eyes sweeping it, he saw seven or eight Fokkers lined up on the tarmac. The one at the far end was all yellow. He grunted in approval.

"Swell! Hoped you'd be home. Maybe we can get this all straightened out today, you rat!"

HUNCHED forward on the seat, he held the Camel dead on for the center of the drome. Grey clad figures rushed to the ground pit guns. A split second later, ribbons of jetting flame ripped up at him. And then, suddenly, the guns ceased fire as a tall figure ran along the tarmac waving his arms wildly. Even at that distance Dickey recognized the figure of Frantz von Meuller. Unconsciously his thumbs slid up to the trigger trips, and

he squinted through the ring sight. But almost instantly he shook his head.

"Might miss the louse!" he grated. "Want to get him *my* way, when I do!"

Relaxing his thumbs from the trips, he reached his free hand into the pocket of his flying suit, pulled out the message container and flung it over the side. The prop-wash tore at it for a second, and then the colored streamer went whipping down to the ground. Tex grinned as it hit not more than three feet in front of the yellow Fokker.

"That gives you an idea, von Meuller!" he shouted into the roar of his engine. "I *threw* that one!"

Without waiting to watch the grey clad figures that rushed over to pick up the message dropper, Tex hauled back on the stick and sent his Camel rocketing skyward. The zoom took him up close to Tucker who was slowly circling the field. Dickey waved one hand and nodded toward the American side of the lines.

"Okay, Tucker," he grunted. "That's all there is to see just now. The boy-friend will have to make the next move."

As though the gods of war had waited for that exact moment, the drifting cloud banks seemed to split apart and virtually shower Fokkers down through the air! Dickey saw them first and fired a warning burst for Tucker's benefit. He then went charging around toward the north, with the idea of skirting the Fokkers and beat-



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ing it back home. It was a good maneuver, and perhaps it would have worked had it not been for Tucker.

Snapping a glance back over his shoulder, Tex saw the big pilot's plane skid badly as he over-maneuvered in a desperate effort to split-arc around and follow Dickey. Before Tucker could correct his mistake he had lost precious seconds. Coming down like so many bats out of hell, the Fokker pilots cut in between the two American planes. There were at least twenty of them, Tex judged after a quick count. Half of them cut over toward him and the other half went for Tucker. In nothing flat, both Camels were completely ringed.

"Any day in the week!" Dickey roared, and slammed his plane through a flashing full roll. "The more, the better!"

Through narrowed eyes he saw his bursts tear a Fokker's windshield from its brackets. The goggled face right in back of it came next. The German's head snapped back as though hit by a baseball bat. Then it fell over grotesquely to one side, a glistening smear of crimson. The plane swerved dizzily to one side, dropped by the nose and went plunging down.

"Get the idea?" Tex thundered, and went corkscrewing right out from under the noses of two Fokkers tearing down from behind. "It's—"

He cut it off short as he glanced across the sky to where Tucker was having his own scrap. The trouble was that the big pilot's plane wasn't there! He spotted it a moment later. The other Camel was coasting sloppily toward the ground. As a matter of fact, it was coasting straight toward the field of the Ninth Fokkers. Dickey groaned aloud. Tucker was all washed up with the war. A Spandau-nicked feed line had obviously done the trick. The Camel's prop was motionless straight across the nose.

Suddenly his spinning brain realized a

fact that had escaped him during the last few moments. The Fokker pilots were slamming burst after burst in on him, but not exactly *at* him. As he tried for the fifth time to hook up out of his dive and race west, a skyful of smoking tracers zipped past the nose of his plane. A quick glance upward and he saw four Fokkers boring in. A blind man could have seen that the pilots were making no effort to hit his ship. They seemed content to ring the plane with a barrier of bullets, and let it go at that.

"Von Meuller's orders, huh?" he snarled. "Mustn't touch until he says so? *Fight, damn you!*"

A SNAP glance down, however, changed Dickey's mind. The tree tops were right under his wings. With altitude he still might have a hope, but now, there wasn't a hope in hell. He had the choice of one of three things. He could continue to fight his way west until the Fokker swarm chewed his wings and tail section to ribbons, at will, and forced him to make a crash landing. Or, he could dive into the ground right now and get it all over with quickly. Or he could do just what the Fokker pilots wanted him to do—signal his surrender and let them herd him back to von Meuller's field.

During his war career in France, Tex Dickey had done many crazy and utterly insane things. But he was nobody's damn fool. Relaxing in the seat he raised one hand above his head and moved it from side to side.

"Alright!" he shouted. "Go on and do just what that dirty tramp told you to do. You win—for now!"

Flanked on all sides by Fokkers, Dickey flew back to von Meuller's field, cut the throttle and switch and eased down.

Resting both hands in plain sight on the rim of the cockpit, he waited as two

German soldiers raced out. One carried a Mauser and the other a Luger. Both guns were trained dead on Tex. The soldier with the Mauser skidded to a halt, gripped the gun hard, and nodded his head.

"Get out, *Amerikanner!*" he growled. "You are my prisoner!"

Dickey chuckled harshly as he climbed carefully to the ground.

"March in front!" the German muttered. "Try to escape, and I'll shoot!"

"And would von Mueller kick your teeth out for smearing me, now!" Tex rapped at him.

As Dickey started toward the tarmac and the group of uniformed figures there, a spark of hope kindled within him. It was snuffed out a moment later, however. The German holding the Luger mumbled something, then grabbed hold of Tex, swung him around and took away his service automatic.

"There's a pen-knife in my tunic pocket!" the Yank clipped. "Better watch out!"

The German let a shrug be his comeback to that one, and gave Tex a shove that almost sent him to his knees. Catching his balance, the Yank steeled himself and walked toward the group on the tarmac. Perhaps the difference in uniform drew his eyes to the left first. He saw Tucker, his face still beet red with smoul-

dering anger, standing between two huge armed German guards who weren't taking their eyes off him for an instant.

And then Tex saw the central figure of the group—the most important one of all. The build of Frantz von Mueller was pretty much the same as Tex had seen from pictures of him months and months ago. The man's face was decidedly different. Once it had been the half sneering and altogether haughty face of the Teutonic aristocrat. But now it was the face of a killer. Not a posed expression, however. A jagged scar down the left cheek gave a leering twist to the mouth. Another across the forehead gave a peculiar, almost weird slant to the eyes. And the third, just under the nose, drew up the man's lip to expose the top teeth, even when he was not smiling.

German surgery had undoubtedly tried its best with what the crash had left of Frantz von Mueller. But it had simply transferred the man's ruthless character to his face.

CHAPTER FOUR

Eagles Adrift

"STILL the fool, aren't you, Captain? I knew that you'd be coming over here, so I arranged for my men to welcome you."

The drama and the glory of the Prize Ring unfurled before your eyes with a punch that will floor the fiction world. This book contains what we are proud to call the greatest fight novel it has ever been our privilege to publish—**GLOVES FOR A GHOST**—by William O'Sullivan; a complete fact analysis of the Heavyweight Situation and the best fight stories it is possible to obtain. We heartily recommend

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Tex stared into his slanted eyes and grunted.

"And you're still yellow, aren't you, von Meuller! Even your plane's that way, now. Don't risk any kind of a scrap nowadays, do you?"

The German's eyes spat hate, but he stood where he was. Shoving a hand in his pocket he pulled out a sheet of paper. With a smirk, that was probably meant for a smile, he held it up for Tex to see.

"Your little note requesting a meeting," he said. Then with a sneer, "Quite a gesture, Captain Dickey. Typical of you—sheer bluff! Had I not made other arrangements I would gladly have accepted your little challenge. As it is, you will get your wish. And I shall get mine—watching you die!"

The German fairly hissed the last word. Then twisting his head, he fixed his eyes on Tucker and seemed to mull over a few thoughts for a moment.

"Of course, you both will die," he murmured, as though speaking to himself. "My pilots didn't know which was you, Captain, so they forced you both to land. I'm glad of that. It gives me a thought. Yes, a very splendid thought!"

With a snarl for emphasis, the German turned to a junior officer, a mountain of a man.

"Take the prisoners to the guardroom!" von Meuller barked. "Stay there with them until I send for them. Your life is forfeit if either of them escapes! You understand?"

The huge German showed fanged teeth in a grin of complete understanding. Unholstering a Luger, which looked like a water pistol in his tremendous paw, the man stepped over and took up a position directly in back of Dickey. At the same time Tucker's guards gave the big pilot a shove and sent him stumbling over beside Dickey. Tex caught him before the man went flat on his face.

"See what a dope you turned out to be, Tucker?" Tex snapped at him. "I told you this was a personal job."

The other curled his lip.

"And a hell of a lot *you're* doing about it!" he snarled.

Tex was on the point of making a crack about Tucker's dumb flying, but he kept his mouth shut, and for two reasons. One, because it was partly his fault for permitting Tucker to tag him over. And two, because a possible way to get Tucker out of the mess suddenly popped into his mind. The Fokker patrol had all landed by now. Most of the planes had their props still ticking over. The pilots had legged out and run up to the tarmac to get a close look at their prisoners. There was one Fokker over on the far side. If Tucker could leg around the row of buildings toward which this gorilla was marching them, why—

Dickey turned his head toward Tucker.

"This just goes to show you how a dumb cluck can spoil the parade for a guy that knows how!" he grated. "If I hadn't been so damn soft hearted I would have sloughed you again, and put you away for the rest of the day, thick head!"

Tucker bunched his fists.

"I wish you'd tried it!" he rasped. "I just wish the hell you had!"

Tex slowed his pace a shade and snapped a quick side glance back at the big guard. The man understood English evidently, from the broad grin on his face. He was thoroughly enjoying the novelty of two prisoners being at logger-heads with each other. Face twisted in a grimace of savage anger, Tex moved closer to Tucker.

"Wish I had, huh?" he bit out. "Why, you big hunky, I've got half a mind to do it right now! Your kind needs to be clipped plenty, Tucker!"

The red almost burst through the skin of Tucker's face.

"Damn you, Dickey!" he howled.

He followed up the shout with a mad charge, fists flying. His plan of action timed to the split second, Tex was ready for the charge. As though suddenly shot, he dropped to his knees. Tucker ran into him and slanted off to the left as he struggled to maintain his balance. Fists cocked, muscles bunched, Dickey came up fast, half turned and followed his smashing fist forward with a tiger-like leap.

The big German was slow to catch on to Dickey's ruse. And when he did the steel fist Yank was all over him like a tent. Tripping over his own feet, the German went down and dragged Tex with him. Using the man as a shock absorber, Tex hung onto the gun hand for dear life, and twisted his head around to Tucker.

"That Fokker over there!" Tex barked. "Leg around those buildings. I'll hold this guy. The others are too far away. Get back home! Get the hell out of here!"

Tucker took a step forward.

"But you—?" he began.

Tex's lungs were ready to burst from the grip the German had about him. The man was fighting with the fury of a wounded bear. It wouldn't be long before gorilla strength would tell. He cursed Tucker savagely.

"Get going—*get going!* Damn you, get back to the field. Send bombers! Send anything, but get the hell away while there's time!"

Tucker hesitated the fraction of a second, then whirled.

"I'll get them!" he shouted, and raced around the nearest corner of the end building.

Struggling and thrashing about with the roaring, snarling German, Tex was only able to get snap glances of Tucker's progress. He saw the man tear into view past the far building, then lost him as the German suddenly heaved and almost flung him off. The next glimpse he got was of

Tucker leaping into the Fokker. For a split second his heart stood still as a racing figure stopped, took aim with a Mauser, and fired. Tucker staggered a bit but managed to scramble into the plane. In a roar of sound and swirling dust he was away. Half a dozen other Fokkers went tearing off in pursuit, but through a crimson haze Tex saw Tucker's ship zoom up into the air and go racing westward, a good four hundred yards ahead of the nearest pursuer. A wheezing sigh of relief came from his burning lungs.

"Close!" he panted, and twisted the German's gun hand with every ounce of his strength.

THE man bellowed with pain as two fingers snapped. The others went limp, and with a quick jerking motion, Tex sent the Luger flying. It hit the ground about ten yards away. Jackknifing his knee into the German's stomach, he shoved himself up. Before the man could grab him again he turned and dived headlong for the Luger—but his fingers didn't grasp it. From out of nowhere a booted foot kicked viciously. The toe struck the Luger and knocked it yards away from Tex's clawing fingers. Before he could get to his feet the booted foot kicked again, and a spear of flame sliced through his chest.

"Get up, swine!" von Meuller's voice rasped down at him.

There was enough sense left in Dickey's spinning brain to realize that to disobey was to get a couple of more ribs cracked. Clenching his teeth against the pain, he got to his feet, steadied himself and grinned into the rage inflamed face of the last of the Three Black Devils.

"My pal had a date," he said. "So I told him not to wait for me."

To his surprise, von Meuller ignored the jibe. The man turned and fixed burn-

ing eyes on the huge junior officer who was finally struggling to his feet.

"So you didn't understand, *hein?*" von Meuller purred in a deadly tone. "Well, you have only yourself to blame."

The Luger in his hand cracked and the big German's eyes took on a stupid, hurt look. Then he fell over on his face, a tiny trickle of blood dripping out from a small blue hole directly between his eyes. Von Meuller's eyes, like two agate marbles, swept the faces of his pilots.

"When I give an order," he said in his purring voice, "it is to be obeyed. It will be well for all of you to remember that."

Though an enemy had been killed, a savage urge to leap at von Meuller almost took charge of Dickey. Only the thought that the German's men would tear him off before he could choke life out of the man checked the impulse. Then the man whipped his Luger back to Tex.

"Your friend does not matter, Captain! True, I had planned something that might amuse you, but it is of no moment. I really only expected you, and *you* are here. Incidentally, you have not inquired why I ordered your life spared—for the time being. They could have killed you very easily in the air, you know."

A note of warning sounded within Dickey. He had been expecting this moment. Hardly realizing it, Tex moved his glance past von Meuller and down the tarmac to the all yellow Fokker. Nothing trick about the ship. Just another Fokker. Yet, von Meuller had shot down Jim Tracey in a man to man scrap? Hell, it—

"All right," he grunted. "I'm asking you now!"

The glitter of hate leaped into von Meuller's eyes. His lips quivered slightly, then stretched into a crooked smile.

"You received my note, of course?" he murmured, and nodded his head. "Do you remember the last line, Captain? I

wrote that I wanted *you* to know who killed you, and why. But I also want you to know *how!* That is what I shall now show you!"

The German paused for breath. Suddenly he lashed up with the Luger and gun-whipped Dickey across the face.

"Now march where I order!" he snarled. "Had I not dreamed of this moment for so long, I would gladly kill you with this gun. Now march down the tarmac to my plane!"

CHAPTER FIVE

Death Claims a Killer

WHEN he reached the side of the Fokker, von Meuller's rasping voice brought him to a halt. He turned around and stood perfectly still. An insane idea of making a break for freedom had buzzed through his head as he walked along the tarmac. But simply turning around had snuffed out the idea instantly. Von Meuller and his two score pilots, or more, formed a semi-circle that hemmed him against the fuselage of the Fokker.

Besides, he'd like to find out how the devil von Meuller made Eighty Four go haywire and how he'd gotten good old Jim. That's what made the whole damn business seem cockeyed! It would take a better than A-plus scrapper to bring down Jim, and von Meuller never used to be better than Z-minus. So how—?

The man in question cut in on his rambling thoughts. As Tex glanced at him he noted that the German had pulled on heavy leather flying gloves. In the palm of one he held an ordinary tracer bullet. No, it wasn't exactly a tracer of the usual variety. The bullet was about twice as long, as though it had been moulded in two sections.

"You see this?" von Meuller asked. "A tracer bullet—but watch!"

The man took hold of the forward end with a thumb and forefinger and it broke off under a very small amount of pressure. Taking the broken section, von Meuller tipped it upside down. An ounce or so of fine, splintered glass sifted out and slithered to the ground.

"The covering is lead foil," von Meuller said. "And the contents, Death. But to be exact, that splintered glass has been washed in a deadly poison solution. When the tracer bullet is fired, the heat from the burning tracer melts the lead foil, and the splintered glass sifts into the air. A Spandaus can fire six hundred tracer rounds a minute. With *two* guns firing, you can easily realize that quite a large sized cloud of this splintered glass is created. The idea is obvious, of course. Propeller wash drives these fine particles back to the enemy pilot. A single one of them cutting his cheek, or his hands, is sufficient. Within twenty seconds he is paralyzed, clever, yes?"

Tex stared down at the fine glistening specks of white on the ground at his feet.

"That is how that swine, Tracey, died. And it is how you will die. When you feel the sting of a sliver or two cutting through your skin, you will have just twenty seconds left in which to think! I wish you the most *pleasant* of thoughts!"

Tex saw red. "You dirty, rotten—!"

He wasn't able to say any more. Lagers clubbed him to the ground. He tried to rise, but was clubbed down again. Fire gongs clanged in his head. Through it all, he still managed to hear von Meuller's voice.

"THAT is enough! I want him to know what is taking place. That is *enough*, fools! Now, place him in his own plane, remove all ammunition from his guns, and start the engine. *Hauptmann* Sthole! You will lead the Staffel aloft and surround the field as I have explained. You will force him to stay directly over the field. I shall do the rest. That is all!"

Cannons still booming and bells still clanging in his head, Tex felt himself

DARE-DEVIL ACES



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Two men are caught in a vicious trap of circumstance and robbed of the wings that can give them flight. Death is their pursuer—Death relentless and unforgetting! Strange ghosts still walk along the avenues of War, and they remember the story of Duke and Morrell—who will travel to hell and back in

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being lifted bodily from the ground. Instinctively he feigned unconsciousness. In a matter of seconds he was jammed down into the pit of a plane. He knew from the feel that it was a Camel. Like a sack of wet meal he let himself slump forward. Rough hands jerked him back. Through slitted lids he saw a hand open the throttle, snap on the ignition switch. There came an order in German, a grunt, and the Bentely clattered into life, settled down to a steady purr.

A single figure remained by the fuselage. Tex saw three others run over to the line of Fokkers. One by one they started across the field for the take-off. Seven had cleared their wheels when Tex slowly inched his hand forward to the Camel's throttle. The guard had turned slightly to watch the mass take-off. Twenty yards to the right, von Meuller was giving last minute instructions to the one named Sthole, who was in the pit of a streamered Fokker. He was standing in the angle formed by the wing and fuselage. The field was alive now with planes taking off. The last four were opening up for the initial run.

Tex sucked in his breath, whipped up his left fist and chopped down. The rabbit punch knocked the guard to his knees before he had time to duck. At the same instant Tex banged open the throttle and kicked left rudder hard. The Bentely took every ounce of hop without a single kickback. For two precious split seconds the roar blended in with that of the thundering Mercedes. And those two split seconds were enough for the Camel to lurch forward from a full stop and get underway. Left rudder jammed hard swung it in a vicious ground loop. The wingtips dragged, the plane teetered perilously on one wheel. Then it settled on both and virtually leaped forward.

Von Meuller, cornered by the wing and fuselage of Captain Sthole's plane, tried

frantically to scramble across the lower right wing. Sthole tried to throw himself from the pit. Neither succeeded. Like a roaring thunderbolt the Camel bore down on the Fokker and charged into it at top speed. Bracing himself for the impact, Tex ducked and waited. Wood snapped, wires parted, fabric ripped, the Camel's prop let go and the Bentely leaped straight out of the engine bearers with a metallic howl that seemed to virtually shatter the air.

Braced for the impact, Tex took it, then hurled himself out and down onto the ground. Even as he fell clear, the fuselage of the Camel snapped just aft of the pit. The rear half swung up and toppled down to add to the wreckage of the Fokker.

A horrible scream, which must have come from Sthole's lips, rent the air. Tex didn't give the pinned figure a single glance. As his feet hit the ground, his eyes were fixed on von Meuller. The Camel's left wing held the German fast to a split Fokker strut. Blood streamed from the open scar on his cheek. He was struggling to twist a hand free and get at his holstered Luger.

Tex reached him in one wild leap, got the gun himself, and belted von Meuller a terrific clip on the head. The man went out cold. Pivoting, Tex brought up the Luger and squeezed the trigger. The guard he had chopped down stopped short in his mad dash forward, then he went flat and lay still. Pivoting back, Tex grabbed von Meuller, and wrenched him free. Eyes popping, breath bursting from his lungs, he carried the man over to the yellow Fokker, slammed him across the fuselage in back of the cockpit and then ducked under the fuselage to the other side.

In the next second he was in the pit and sending the yellow Fokker rocketing forward. Only two or three of the cir-

cling Fokker pilots had seen what had happened. The others were too busy getting into formation position. But the three came racing down. That is they started to. Holding the German with one hand, Tex inched the other up the stick to the Spandaus trips in the spade handle grip, and jabbed them forward. A shower of tracers spewed outward and upward. Two short bursts and then Tex kicked right rudder and banked sharply away to avoid running into the cloud of death he had created. The Fokker pilots, seeing the smoking tracers, almost wrenched their wings off in a desperate effort to bank clear.

Whether they did or not, Tex didn't stop to find out. Between him and the Yank lines was clear air. Smashing his clenched fist against the already wide open throttle, he sent the Fokker racing westward to a half mile lead before the Fokker pilots circling overhead realized what was taking place. Fifteen minutes later he tore through an archie greeting from Yank guns, and plowed straight back to Eighty Four's field.

EVERY ship was on the line, props turning over, as he slid down to a fast landing. Pilots in the pits spilled out and came racing toward him. Hot on their heels came the mechanics.

The German had recovered consciousness, and his eyes were glazed with fear. Tex grabbed him by the tunic collar and held him at arm's length. With the other hand he signalled savagely for silence.

"Shut up!" he roared. And when he got silence, "Here's your mysterious man of magic! That crate, there, is his bag of tricks! Remember, I said you wouldn't find a ghost, or some super-devil in the pit, when you found him? Well, here he is. Just a dirty rat. Now, all of you stay right here. Don't move a step. One more

thing to show you, and my job will be finished. Come on, you!"

The last was to von Meuller. Tex emphasized it by propelling the German out toward the center of the field, and helping him along with a booted foot in the right place. Stumbling, hardly able to keep his balance, von Meuller staggered forward. When they did reach the center, Tex yanked him to a halt, and spun him around. In none too gentle fashion he tapped the Luger against the German's chest.

"Now we play my way, von Meuller!" he grated. "No fancy tricks. Just plain air scrapping. See those ships? Take any one you want. I'm going to give you a fifty yard start toward them, then I'm coming for one myself. And after that, I'm going to slap you down to where those rat brothers of yours are hanging out these days. For once, louse, you're going to be on your own. And I never kid, so I'm going to tell you that you won't like it a bit. Now, get traveling for the Camel you want. I'll give you just fifty yards, that's all. Move!"

But the German didn't move.

"No, no!" he husked. "I am your prisoner. I demand that I be treated as such. I—"

Tex hit him in the mouth.

"Like you treated me?" he snapped.

He stopped short, and suddenly nodded.

"Okay, rat!" he said. "Take your choice. Make a break for one of those Camels, or be turned over to your old playmates, the *French Flying Corps*—for treatment!"

Von Meuller's face went chalk white under the caked blood. His knees started to sag.

"*Nein, nein!*" he croaked. "The French—they would—I!"

"Damn right!" Tex stopped him. "And plenty! But I'm giving you a break—a fighting chance. Well?"

The German didn't reply. A hoarse cry bursting from his lips, he struck blindly at Tex, then whirled and raced madly toward the Camel line. Braced for the blow, Dickey didn't even step back. Face granite, he waited and gave von Meuller more than fifty yards, and then whirled into action. He leaped into one of the ships and took it into the air like a startled bird. The German left the ground first, but that was about *all* he did. Savagely bent on the kill, Tex charged in. Von Meuller didn't even bother to fire his own guns. He tried frantically to bank away but a single burst from Tex's guns was sufficient. Made-in-America slugs drilled into a black heart and stopped it forever.

Even as the Camel hit the ground and burst into flames, Tex was coasting back to a landing that took him up close to the pop-eyed group by the squadron office. With a tired shrug he legged out and swept them with his eyes for a moment.

"The clever ones can go down in flames, just like the dumb ones," he muttered. "Keep that in mind, too. Well, that's all. Sergeant! Have a couple of men put on heavy gloves and dollie that Fokker over to the far side of the field. Then touch a match to it. It's no use to anyone, anymore."

"Wait!"

Tucker shouted the word as he shoved

himself to the center of the group. Tex noted that the man's left arm was in a sling as the result of a Mauser bullet.

"Wait a minute, Dickey!" the big pilot cried. "Colonel Baker is on his way down. I phoned him as soon as I came back. He's sending out bombers. We were just leaving. He'll want to see the plane. What's—?"

"The trick?" Tex echoed wearily. "Call it Fokker dust, and forget it. Von Meuller is dead, and there can't be *two* of his brand in Germany. So the stunt won't be repeated. You got your orders, Sergeant. Hop to it!"

Tex shifted his gaze to Tucker's face.

"So the Colonel's on his way down, eh?" he murmured. "I suppose you—?"

Tucker flushed.

"No, Dickey," he stumbled. "I'm a fool! I want to apologize. I— Well, hell, we—aw, you know what I'm trying to say!"

Tex chuckled dryly.

"Don't worry, I'm going to stick as C.O. of this mob. You've sort of got out of hand since poor Jim's number went up. He'd want me to stick around for him. Well, I can't wait for the Colonel to join me. I need my drink now. In fact, I think we all need several. You take care of the mechs, Sergeant. I'll take care of the pilots—and how!"

THE END



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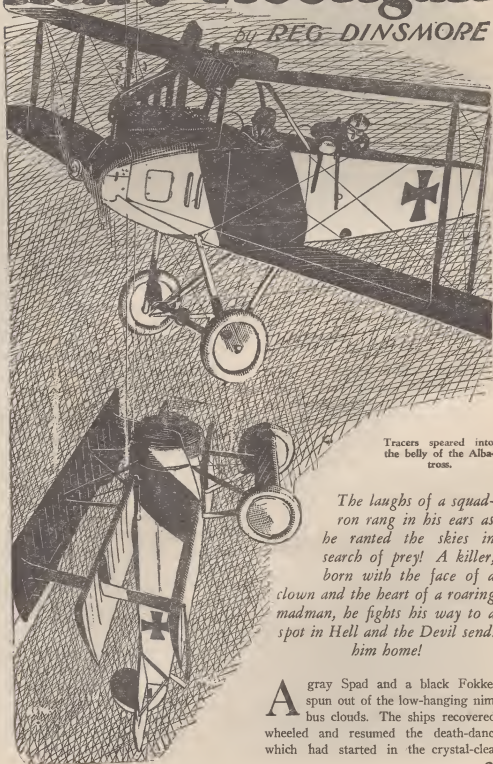
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PROBAK JUNIOR

Hell's Hooligan

by REG DINSMORE



Tracers speared into the belly of the Albatross.

The laughs of a squadron rang in his ears as he ranted the skies in search of prey! A killer, born with the face of a clown and the heart of a roaring madman, he fights his way to a spot in Hell and the Devil sends him home!

A gray Spad and a black Fokker spun out of the low-hanging nimbus clouds. The ships recovered, wheeled and resumed the death-dance which had started in the crystal-clear

heights above the storm. Vickers blended their sharp voices with the brazen chant of Spandaus. Tracers streaked gray through the greasy mists. Zooming, diving, banking, wheeling the two clawed at each other like fighting eagles—eagles whose talons were flame-tipped guns—eagles who struck and wheeled to strike again, unmindful of the slanting rain.

Suddenly, as if by mutual consent, the two winged things drew apart, seemed to measure each other and gather strength for a final, desperate effort. Then with Hisso and Mercedes blending their angry power-songs, they again flashed in—nose to nose. They whirled together with guns yammering and with bullets stripping fabric and shattering fairing strips, and throwing blue sparks from hot motor blocks. They closed until the space between narrowed to a point where collision seemed inevitable.

Then the Fokker swerved. It leaped upward and sideways with cocked wings. Too late! There was a swift, sinister kiss as wing touched wing. Ribs crashed like matchwood. Spars snapped and twisted. An aileron tore loose and whirled down the sky. For a split-second the two ships seemed to hang locked and motionless. Then they fell apart, reeled and plunged earthward.

Pilot Gus Stern cursed like a dockwalloper and reached to cut the ignition. With the torque of the Hisso killed, he managed to recapture partial control of the crippled Spad. Below, through eight hundred feet of rain and ground mist, he glimpsed a tiny spot of green. Grimly he fought the ship until the small patch of field was beneath her nose.

"Wonder if I'll walk away from this one?" was his flashing thought.

Gus jerked a glance over his shoulder and his freckled face brightened with relief. Slightly above and behind him the German ship also wallowed with a dead

stick. A sardonic, hawk-beaked face was grinning at him over the Fokker's pit coaming.

Gus Stern's eyes glared dangerously behind his goggles. "What's that Kraut got to grin about?" he wondered. "Laughing at me! I'm fed up on all this laughing! Am I a funny-man and don't know it, or why does everyone always give me the haw-haw?" Then there were other things to think about and Gus faced grimly ahead.

Wind moaned eerily in the slackened wires of the crippled wing. The ship reeled and tried to fall off. Gus snatched her level again and held the nose as high as he dared. Tree-tops at the edge of the green clearing clutched at the Spad's wheels and she staggered, nosed sharply down. There wasn't enough forward speed for Gus to pull her up. He slammed left stick—hard, and the ship started to roll sluggishly as she fell. Gus stiffened an arm against the crash-pad as a wingtip bit into the black earth of a beet field, and his safety-belt bit painfully at his middle. As the ship went over onto her back, he pulled in his head like a turtle. There was a tooth-loosening jolt and then Gus was hanging head-downward by his belt. The only sound was the sizzling of wet mud on the Hisso's hot cylinders.

He was down—and alive.

Gus clawed frenzidly at the clasp of his belt. It loosened suddenly and he fell four feet to strike on his shoulders among wet beet tops. He rolled clear of the inverted fuselage, got to his feet and showed up his goggles.

The crippled Fokker was crabbing to a landing not three hundred feet away. Her wheels threw black muck and young beets high in the air. Her undercarriage crumpled and she came to rest with her cross-marked tail standing almost straight in the air. Then Gus was sprinting toward her, hauling out his service .45 as he ran.

"Get 'em up! he barked at the German pilot. "Make a move to burn that crate and I'll fill you as full of holes as a cribbage board!"

A look of surprise swept the German's dark face. Then he grinned a nasty grin. But his hands appeared above the cockpit coaming, shoved the goggles off his eyes and clasped comfortably on top of his head. His grin changed to an irritating laugh and he said:

"The *Amerikaner* a joke makes, *ja*?"

That laugh made Gus boil. "You think so, eh? You'll change your mind before I'm through with you, Heinie. Leg out of that pit!"

As the German climbed down to the ground, Gus, watching him narrowly, was thinking about this laughing business. Back at Kelly they'd laughed at him. They'd laughed at him at Tours. His own wing-mates, the pilots of the 8th American Pursuit, had grown fat laughing at him. And girls had always laughed at him—that is, all but one. And now this hatched-faced Kraut!

What of it if his hair was the hue of a pale brick and his freckles the size of a dime? What of it if he had big feet and a face that was mostly ears and mouth? He could kick a crate around the sky with the best of them—and in this man's war, that's what counted. They were going to quit giving him the horse-laugh or he'd know why! Especially this hooked-nose Hun!

The German's shoulders jiggled with mirth as he slid down the tilted fuselage. Once on the ground his hands went aloft again but he continued to chuckle. Then his glance went to a strip of woods beside the beet field from beyond which came the roar of an approaching truck.

Scowling, Gus edged cautiously within arm's reach of the German. He took the Luger from the pilot's belt and dropped it in the pocket of his flying coat. "Hear

that truck?" he asked. "They saw us come down and they're heading for here. You'll be taking a little ride, so lay off your cussed laughing and save your breath to answer the questions you'll be asked."

Again the German went off into a paroxysm of laughter. He roared. He slapped his knee. His face got red. Between gales of unholy mirth he gasped surprising information.

"Twelve miles you are behind the German lines, *Amerikaner*. Twelve miles and you tell me *my* ship not to burn! As we fight above the clouds, you lost become, *ja*? You make—how you call it—a boner? Ha-ha-ha!"

A great goneness hit Gus Stern in the pit of his stomach. If this were so he surely had pulled a boner, and a big one, —a boner that he would never live down! He listened to the truck. It stopped on the far side of the woods and he heard voices shouting as men came dashing through the narrow thicket. They were speaking in *German*!

The Hun pilot was bending over his arms, laughing gleefully. Gus straightened him up with a swift kick. "Listen, Kraut, I got things to do, see? I can't be bothered, see? You make one move from this spot and I'll crucify you—you hee-hawin' hyena!"

THE .45 in Gus' hand whipped toward the Fokker and spat. Petrol gushed from the ship's bullet-punctured fuel tank and spread darkly over the dope-treated fabric. Gus scratched a match, tossed it at the ship and ducked away. Yellow flame leaped up to meet the cold rain.

Gus ground the pistol into the small of the German's back. "Over there to my ship!" he ordered. "On the double!"

The German was no longer laughing and his English completely deserted him. "*Ach, verdammte hund!*"

"Ain't so funny now, eh?" Gus' voice

was a fighting growl. "You hit it up faster if you don't want your guts blasted through your wishbone!"

The German hit it up.

Another shot from the .45, another match and, as Gus rushed the German toward a deep drainage ditch across the field from the woods, the two ships blazed fiercely to destruction.

A wailing of struts in the storm,—gray wings swooping in the gray rain,—the blast of a Hisso, suddenly gunned! Gus shot a glance aloft.

A Spad, careening with speed, sliced low over the beet field, a goggled face peering over the pit coaming. Danny Drenning! Gus knew that Danny must have seen him fight the German down into the clouds and had come to find out what had happened to him. Would Danny be crazy enough to try to land in this little hole in the woods where a take-off was well nigh impossible?

Ah! Danny had seen him! He waved as the Spad hurtled past. And—hell! Danny was *laughing*. He was laughing as he always laughed at him! In his anger, Gus forgot the German, turned to thumb his nose at his hard-boiled little wing-mate.

Socko!

The blow caught Gus behind the ear and staggered him. As he stumbled, he swung his gun-arm backward with all his brawny strength and felt an impact and the crunch of bone under the heavy automatic. There was a pained yelp and the thud of a fall.

He wheeled. The German pilot was on his back among the wet beet tops. His nose was no longer hooked—it was a concaved blob between his eyes and blood was trickling from both flattened nostrils.

Gus collared the man, snatched him to his feet and pushed him on toward the ditch. "Now you've got a funny face too, Kraut! Another funny stunt like that

and you'll get more'n a busted beak! Hit that ditch!"

Behind Gus, German voices shouted from the edge of the woods. Then came the sharp barking of Mausers. Something snatched savagely at Gus' sleeve. Another bullet ripped away one of his boot heels and threw black mud onto the man running before him. Then a Hisso was suddenly roaring above and Gus threw a glance behind him.

Danny Drenning's Spad was pivoting on a wing-tip. Her twin Vickers vomited orange flame. The knot of Germans across the field went off their feet as if flattened by a mighty wind. A lone survivor screamed hoarsely, flung his rifle away and fled back into the shelter of the woods.

Danny Drenning banked the Spad at the end of the field and came back slow and low. As he passed above Gus, he closed his throttle so that his voice could be heard and yelled, "So long, Funny-face! I'll tell that Frog-filly you won't be seeing her tonight!"

Gus shook a knotted fist at the ship and Danny's laugh blended with the roar of the Hisso as he lifted the Spad and headed for home.

The beet field lay two miles behind. Gus sat on the bank of a willow-bordered little stream and smoked a cigarette while the German pilot, kneeling at the water's edge washed the blood from his battered face. Dim with distance the mutter of big guns could be heard. It still rained.

Gus was thinking of Danny Drenning. Danny would be back at the field of the 8th by now, telling his story while the outfit had another laugh at his, Gus's, expense. When Danny told them that he saw him marching a Hun around at the point of a gun behind the German lines, that bunch of unfeeling roughnecks would fairly explode with glee. He hoped they'd all choke, especially Danny.

The German got to his feet, and tenderly began mopping his swollen features with a handkerchief. "Ach, my boor dose!" he moaned.

Gus grinned: "You mean your *poor* nose, don't you? Sounds like you had a bad case of adenoids. Here, have a butt. I want to see if you can blow smoke through that mushed beak."

The German hurled the cigarette into the stream. A torrent of abuse in German poured from his lips, then he switched back to English.

"But it is in Germany you are, imbecile! It is my brisoner you are!"

"Yeah? So what?"

"So escape you cannot! Throw away your gun and my Luger give back. Then to the drome of His *Excellenz*, the Baron von Stull, I will conduct you. There by *offiziers* of the Intelligence you will be questioned. From there you will go to the *offiziers* brison camp at Landshut, where excellent dreadment you will get."

Gus' homely face became thoughtful. It was von Stull's staffel which had been causing so much trouble on the sector. Only yesterday the 8th had received orders to clear the skies of von Stull's ships if possible. Even though he had little hope of escape, it could do no harm to learn the location of von Stull's drome.

"You say I'll get good treatment at Landshut?"

"Excellent! Like one happy family are those *Amerikaner offiziers* there."

"And they don't have to fly any more?"

"*Nein, nein!* For them the war is over."

"Sounds all right. How far to von Stull's drome?"

"It is but eight kilometers—just beyond those hills." The German pointed at several low, wooded ridges to the north. "Once at my drome all your troubles will be over."

"Your drome? You are one of von Stull's pilots?"

The German clicked his heels and bowed stiffly. "*Ja*. Perhaps to you I am known. I am Kapitan Emil Fruhner, second in command of *Jagdstaffel* 36 of which His Excellence, the Baron von Stull, is commander."

"Charmed, I'm sure!" said Gus grimly. He had indeed heard of Emil Fruhner—had heard of him from Bill Keene's own lips! Bill Keene had been shot down in German territory and Fruhner had tortured him in an attempt to extract information from the American pilot. When Keene did finally manage to escape and regain his own lines, he was a physical and mental wreck who would never fly again.

"Well, well, well!" said Gus. "This is a pretty swell war after all!"

Fruhner looked at him curiously. He didn't like the icy note that had come into Gus' voice. "And you will surrender?" he asked.

"I will like hell! Get peeled Boche! I want those clothes!"

"But for a spy you will be shot!" protested Fruhner. "For you to be caught in German uniform is sure death!"

"Death is duck soup compared with what you did to Bill Keene, you louse! Shed those clothes!"

A WOODEN bridge crossed the stream that Gus and his prisoner had followed, now, for a mile. They were hiding beneath it and above their heads rumbled trucks loaded with supplies and ammunition going up to the German trenches. The posts and under timbers had recently been covered with a preserving coat of fresh tar.

Fruhner, dressed only in his boots and under garments, leered at his red-headed captor. "Imbecile! You have no chance

of escape! What do you think you can do?"

Gus began kicking dry driftwood twigs against the foot of one of the tar-coated bridge posts. "Oh, one thing and another! I don't get into Germany very often, but when I do—" He scratched a match and tossed it into the dry litter. A snake-like tongue of flame licked hungrily at the tar.

"There's a nice little home-fire burning! Now, Boche, on your way down-stream and keep out of sight in the brush. Don't forget that I'm right behind you with this gun."

As they skulked cautiously away, Gus heard trucks thunder up and stop. There came the excited yelling of men and the roar of leaping flames. Gus grinned happily as he hurried his prisoner along.

A quarter-mile farther on, the brush of the stream bank merged with heavier growth which stretched up to the peak of a low hill. Wishing to get a view of the country ahead, Gus steered his prisoner up the slope to the summit. There he came upon a stone quarry which, evidently, had not been operated since the beginning of the war. The walls of the pit were perpendicular and ran down to a pool of black water eighty feet below. Ten feet below the brink of the wall where Gus stood, workmen had left a six-foot shelf of granite. Once on that shelf a man would have no way of escape. The perfect setup gave Gus an idea.

"It dawns on me, Fruhner that you're excess baggage. You cramp my style. Suppose you just drop down onto that shelf and cool your heels a while."

"*Nein, nein!* Leave me there you cannot! I will starve! I will die!"

"And you can think of how Bill Keene felt while you were working on him," said Gus, grimly. "Drop onto that shelf or drop here with a nice hole between your rat eyes!"

Fruhner took one look at the frowning

muzzle of the blue-black automatic, another at the icy eyes behind it and dropped onto the shelf, where he landed safely.

"After Germany's licked," Gus said unfeelingly, "I'm bringing Bill Keene here to show him your bones, Fruhner. He'll want to kick a couple of teeth out of your skull for souvenirs. Bye-bye, Emil!"

"Wait! Wait!" Fruhner's face was the color of wet ashes. "From Germany I will help you to escape if you will not leave me here! *Ja, ja!* I will more than that do! Important military information I will divulge!"

"Yeah? Listen you rat, I wouldn't trust you as far as I could fly a tank!"

"But it is your own squadron—the 8th American Pursuit—that my information concerns!"

"All right, shoot the works. If I find out you've told me the truth, I'll see that someone finds out where you are. Otherwise I'm fetching Bill Keene back here after those teeth!"

"If I tell, you will still leave me here?"

"You bet!"

"But if the truth I tell, my escape you will arrange soon?"

"That's what I said."

"*Ach*, you *Amerikaners* are so—so hard!"

"You ain't learned the half of it, Boche! Get goin' with your spiel!"

The German covered his face with shaking hands and groaned. "It is that the field of the 8th American Pursuit is to be bombed tonight." The words came slowly, as if it were an effort to let go of them.

Somehow Gus had the feeling that the man was telling the truth. "Go on from there," he ordered.

"It is with pursuit ships that the bombing will be accomplished—six Fokkers from my drome. Because the bombs are

small and light a Fokker can carry six of them."

"Then why not a Gotha with all thirty-six of the eggs?"

"Because the commandant of the bombing squadron will have nothing to do with the new bombs. The bombs are an experiment, the recent invention of a *kapitan* of Ordnance named 'Berr.' The explosive, although possessing twenty times the destructive energy of gun-cotton, has not yet been refined to a point where it is safe to handle. Therefore the hesitation of the bomber commandants."

"But von Stull will risk it?"

"Ja, because if the new explosive proves to be a success on this raid, *Kapitan* Berr will turn over his secret formula to the Imperial Government and His *Excellenz*, the Baron, will share the honor of the invention with Berr. It has been so agreed between them."

"And those birds of the 8th are to be the guinea-pigs, eh?"

"Ja," scowled Fruhner.

"Thanks for the info, Kraut," Gus said. "And it better be on the level."

When Gus Stern left the German in the old quarry and headed for the drome of von Stull, he did so without any plan of action. He knew only that at the drome would be ships and the roar of motors and the reek of burnt gas and hot

oil, and these, to Gus, were as essential as the smell of salt brine to a sailor.

There was no time to make plans anyway, for it required all his wits to keep out of sight in crossing the farmlands between the old quarry and the low hills beyond which the drome lay. All day he crawled slowly in shallow drainage ditches, skulked in the cover of hedges and as he became mud-plastered and scratched with thorns his temper suffered accordingly. He was angry not at Fruhner, who had been the cause of all his trouble, but at his own wing-mates of the 8th, who, he knew, would think it all a big joke.

Oh, they'd be laughing at him all right, leave it to Danny Drenning to see to that.

As Gus reached the foot of the hills and made his way swiftly up the wooded slopes, he almost hoped that all thirty-six of von Stull's high-tension bombs would land on Danny Drenning's neck.

IT HAD ceased raining and the earth was smoking with ground mists when Gus finally reached the summit of the hill. Through the coiling mist-wraiths he could make out the German drome in the valley far below. He could see ships on the field and tiny ants which were men moving about the canvas hangars. He also saw a small farmhouse on a lit-



G-8 and His BATTLE ACES

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tle hill at the side of the field. A small flag floating there designated it as von Stull's headquarters. Wanting a closer look, he started down the slope.

Coming at last to where he could see the field through the trees ahead, Gus slowed his pace and began a cautious approach. Then, although somewhat prepared for surprises, he nearly fell over backward when a fat German sentry stepped out from behind the thick trunk of an ancient beech and confronted him with threatening bayonet.

For a moment the German uniform that Gus wore puzzled the sentry. Then, as Gus' hand streaked for his automatic, the man lunged.

Gus pulled in his belly and flung his body to the side. The bayonet ripped into his tunic at the middle, ploughed a six-inch furrow along his lean ribs and emerged through the tunic again. The force of the sentry's lunge brought his contorted face close and Gus swung his heavy automatic at the man's head with all his strength.

The German went to his knees with a grunt. His coal-scuttle hat fell off. He tried to jerk his bayonet loose but its guard had caught in Gus' belt. Gus was hauled down on top of the man. They clinched, rolled and scuffled.

Gus got a hold on the man's throat, put a kink in his windpipe and held on. With his pistol he flailed at the close-cropped head. He couldn't get a full-armed swing and his blows seemed to have little effect.

In the struggle the rifle, pinned by its bayonet in Gus' tunic, flopped wildly about. Its butt flew up in the air, the point of the bayonet twisted and caught against the German's chest. Gus, seeing his chance, dropped his pistol, grabbed the rifle barrel and heaved down on it.

The fat German went suddenly limp.

Gus got to his feet. He was breathing

hard. His face was grim. Well, that was that and there had been no noise. He guessed that Luciele would have called him: "My warrior—brave as a lion," all right, if she had seen that mix-up. And she'd be wrong. He'd been so scared that he was still weak.

Gus picked up the rifle of the dead sentry, made sure there was a cartridge in the firing-chamber and others in the magazine, then began a cautious advance to the edge of the woods. For the last few yards he crawled and then lay in the concealment of a bunch of weeds with the German drome spread before him.

To the left, no more than forty yards away, the row of camouflaged hangars began. Six Fokkers were lined up before the hangars and men were busy attaching small cylindrical objects to the under side of their wings. Gus knew that these objects, hardly larger than window-weights, must be the bombs of which Emil Fruhner had spoken.

A group of officers stood near the ships, watching the men at work. From pictures he had seen, Gus recognized the tall officer with the scarred face as von Stull himself, and he concluded that the thick-set man with whom von Stull was in conversation, was the inventor of the bombs, Berr.

Gus looked the situation over carefully and cursed behind his teeth. With the field cluttered with men as it was, he hadn't a chance in the world of stealing a ship. He cursed again as he thought of the date he'd miss with Luciele and the things that Danny Drenning would tell her.

And then startling things began to happen.

A two-place Albatross popped over the hill, flew the length of the field, turned and landed on the far side of the tarmac. The ship had no more than stopped rolling when a man leaped out of its ob-

server's pit and sprinted toward the group of officers near the Fokkers.

Gus took one look at the scarecrow figure and nearly yelled aloud in his surprise. The scanty-clad sprinter was none other than Emil Fruhner! How he had escaped from the old quarry, Gus had no idea, but he did know that Fruhner's arrival meant trouble.

Fruhner's ludicrous appearance did not deter him from making an immediate report to von Stull. Von Stull heard him through, and then wheeling to the others about him, barked rapid orders. Gus could well imagine what those orders were! Word was to be spread that an American flying officer was down and hiding somewhere in the locality. A search was about to start. Probably the guard about the field would be doubled—which would doubtless result in the discovery of the dead sentry—which would, in turn, concentrate the search about the flying field. It began to look to Gus as if there were little chance of keeping that date with Luciele tonight.

The bombs were now all in place, six to each Fokker, a cluster of three under each lower wing. All but four of the ground men went back to other work in the hangars. The four brought a dolly and gingerly trundled one of the Fokkers out onto the field to the line. Two mechanics followed and started the motor of the ship for a last check-up before the forthcoming raid. The clouds were lowering again. Thirty minutes more and it would be dark.

The ground men had returned to the hangars and were placing their dolly beneath the tail of another Fokker. Gus noticed how carefully they handled the ship. And you couldn't blame them, loaded as she was with those touchy bombs.

Touchy bombs! Fruhner had said that a sudden blow—! Say, there *was* an idea! Gus' freckled face split in a sudden grin.

Right from where he lay, he could—! Boy, with a bunch of excitement around this Boche drome, he might be able to keep that date with Luciele after all. Anything was worth a try, just for the sake of putting a crimp in Danny Denning's plans, the rat.

A yell from the woods behind him froze Gus' blood. Somebody had found the carcass of the fat sentry! It was now or never! Gus cuddled the stock of the Mauser against his freckled cheek and lined the sights on one of those cylinders beneath the wing of the Fokker now on the dolly. He took a deep breath, held it and slowly squeezed the trigger.

WITH the impact of the bullet on the bomb, the Fokker, the hangar behind it and the ground crew disappeared in a mighty blob of lemon-colored flame. There was a deafening crash and a rush of air against Gus' face.

He worked the bolt of the Mauser, peered through the greenish smoke. He couldn't see the next Fokker, so he held on the bomb rack of the ship beyond and pulled the trigger again.

A larger burst of flame, an explosion that caused the very earth to totter, and when again Gus could see through the smoke, only one Fokker remained by the hangars. The concussion had fired the bombs on the ships to each side of the one he had shot at.

With another coolly-placed shot, Gus blasted that one to nothingness, then, leaping to his feet, sprinted for the idling Fokker on the line. He was conscious of men running to intercept him, of Lugers barking and bullets whining a death-chant about his ears. Something slapped sharply at his thigh and sent him stumbling, but he recovered and ran on.

The two mechanics who had started the Fokker's motor were his main worry now. One of them was in the cockpit, the other

standing on the ground. They stood staring, frozen by the swift destruction of the other ships, but when Gus swung the muzzle of the Mauser toward them, they came swiftly to life. The one in the pit dived headlong to the ground. He picked himself up and sprinted after his companion who was already leaving at a swift lope. They had left the motor of the Fokker running, her prop ticking over.

Gus yelled joyously and kicked the chocks from beneath the wheels. He wheeled, drove the last two bullets in the Mauser at the knot of charging Germans and had the satisfaction of seeing the leader plough his face in the dust. Then he was leaping for the Fokker's pit.

Even while on the wing, Gus reached into the pit and slugged the throttle wide. The ship began to roll. As Gus legged over the pit coaming, bullets slashed at the camel back and snapped through tight-drawn wing fabric. Then his feet were on the rudder-bar, the stick in his fist and the Fokker was getting light on her feet. Another second and she was off.

Gus held the ship low, building speed, watching the tachometer. As soon as he dared, he lifted her in a climbing turn. The Mercedes grunted with the labor but responded nobly. Now, with two hundred feet beneath his wheels, he was sweeping back across the field. He poked his red head over the pit coaming.

Below, the field was a madhouse. Only one hangar remained standing and that one was burning. Men were running about like panicky ants. At the side of the field a machine-gun was stuttering at him but, in his excitement, the gunner was throwing his bullets wide. Three men were sprinting toward the Albatross across the field and Gus recognized them as Fruhner, Captain Berr and the pilot who had brought Fruhner back to the

drome. He saw Fruhner pile into the control pit and Berr vault to the observer's pit. The pilot swung the prop and dark smoke jetted from the exhaust stacks as the still-warm motor caught.

Gus didn't worry about the Albatross for he knew the tripe would fly circles around it. He discovered six metal rings hanging from wires beneath his instrument board and knew them to bomb-toggles. Sight of them gave him another idea. He had just passed over the farmhouse that was von Stull's headquarters. He was grinning as he stood the Fokker on a wing-tip and banked around to pass over it again. Just as it was disappearing under the ship's nose, he jerked one of the rings and looked back and down to see fragments of the building riding skyward on a gush of flame.

"Some eggs!" grinned Gus. "Guess I'll save the other five for some Boche gun positions I know about."

There really wasn't much reason for lingering longer, so Gus pointed the ship's nose southward.

He took a look behind. Fruhner and Berr in the Albatross were in hot pursuit and he didn't like the idea of running away. But how could he stop to fight them when even now that damned Danny Drenning might be on his way to Lucile?

For two minutes Gus sent the Fokker hurtling through the gathering dusk and then took another look behind, and got an uncomfortable jolt. That cursed Albatross seemed to be gaining on him. What the heck was wrong? A tripe ought to outfly an Albatross by at least ten miles an hour. Did the Albatross have a super-Mercedes in her nose, or was there something screwy with this Fokker! Had the mechanic who had left her pit so hurriedly back there on the Hun field left the carburetor slightly out of adjustment?

As the Albatross continued to gain, Gus gave up the idea of bombing those German gun positions. He'd have to leave those high-tension eggs somewhere in Germany, and right soon, for already the lines were in sight. Hooking all the toggle-rings on the fingers of his left hand, he pushed the stick to the fire-wall and went down in a screaming power-dive.

Gus pulled out of the dive no more than a hundred feet above the carpet and, as the German trenches swept beneath his wheels, pulled the bomb-toggles. The tripe's polished wings lighted with the yellow flare of the explosion behind him but he did not look back. His trouble lay ahead. And now it came—pencil-points of winking flame from the muzzle of a thousand Springfields and the American machine guns.

He had hoped that Fruhner would turn back at the lines but a glance behind him told him that he was to have no such good luck. The Albatross, too, had run the gauntlet of American fire and was roaring uncomfortably close in his wake.

IT WAS a glum group of pilots who had gathered before the mess tent on the field of the 8th, waiting for the evening meal. The story that Danny Drenning had brought back from across the lines, for some reason, had not struck them as being funny in the least. Even Danny himself was as solemn as an undertaker.

It was keen-eared Dave Landry who first caught the sound. "Listen!" he said suddenly, his dark head lifting. "Motors! Mercedes. Coming this way!"

With a swelling roar two ships swept over the hill to the north of the field. Two swift shadows against the evening sky—German ships!

The field of the 8th came suddenly to life. A siren wailed. Machine-gunners sprinted for their positions, hurriedly

stripping the canvas covers from their guns. Ground men scuttled for cover, expecting a bombing raid. Major Kane, the C.O., came running across from the operations shack to stare at the approaching ships.

The planes were getting close now. Suddenly, flame winked from the cowlings of the pursuing Albatross. Tracers, reaching for the Fokker, streaked red against the background of dark clouds.

The C.O.'s voice blared like a trumpet. "Hold it! That may be a trick but I don't think so! Hold everything!"

Eagles striking in the half-darkness—eagles whose talons were flame-tipped guns—eagles whose wings bore the black crosses of Germany! Fighting above an American airdrome!

The Fokker had turned and it flashed upward in a zoom until it was hanging by its prop with the Albatross, which had started to follow it down, roaring above it. Then they saw tracer from the Fokker's guns spear upward into the belly of the larger ship. The deadly hail stitched backward along the two-seater's fuselage. The Albatross went out of control and fell off in the beginning of a spin while the Fokker recovered from her stall and nosed down for a landing.

Those on the tarmac paid no attention to the Albatross as it crashed in the woods across the field. They were running to where the Fokker had landed near the hangars. They stood in silence as a gawky, red-headed figure climbed stiffly from the pit.

Gus Stern glared belligerently at the pilots about him, his gaze moving swiftly from face to face. Failing to see Danny Drenning, who, with two others had been ordered to go to the Albatross, he turned and made for the pilot's quarters at a run.

Danny Drenning and the others returned from the crashed Albatross lead-

ing a raving madman—Emil Fruhner. They led him to Major Kane and at the sight of the officer, Fruhner's raving ceased and he refused to talk.

"I guess we got most of the dope anyway, Skipper," said Danny Drenning, a note of awe in his voice. "This Kraut was a little woozy when we dragged him out of the crash and he answered a lot of questions before he realized what he was doing. It seems that he is Fruhner, second in command of the von Stull outfit."

"Is that all he said, Drenning?"

"He said plenty more, sir. Plenty! He says the von Stull crowd is washed out."

"Washed out?" the C.O.'s jaw was hanging loose.

"Yes, sir. Seems von Stull was planning to bomb us tonight—small, high-powered bombs dropped from pursuit ships. Six Fokkers loaded with bombs were on the Boche field. Somehow Gus reached the drome, got hold of a rifle and exploded the bombs with bullets—all but those on this Fokker he made his escape with. As Gus took off, he dropped a bomb on von Stull's headquarters and blew the building, with von Stull in it, to hell. There's practically nothing left at von Stull's field.

"Furthermore there's a dead Hun in the observer's pit of that Albatross over there, sir, that this Kraut says is the in-

ventor of this new explosive. Fruhner, here, is real sore because the formula was a secret that died with him! That's all, sir."

The C.O. digested this with a smile. "Put that prisoner under guard," he ordered. "Find Stern and send him to me. If his report doesn't make Wing sit up and take notice of the 8th, nothing will!"

They found Gus in his cubicle, as naked as the day he was born. He had scrubbed himself until the freckles on his hide stood out like polka-dots. There was a criss-cross of gauze and adhesive plastered on his ribs and another on his legs. His homely face was an inch deep beneath creamy lather and he was hurriedly stropping an old-fashioned straight razor. He did not look around as the pilots crowded through the doorway.

"Why the big clean-up?" someone asked.

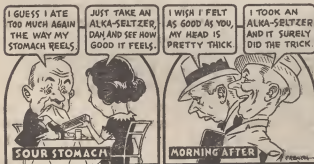
"Goin' to town!" Gus growled.

"What for?"

Gus peeked into a bit of cracked mirror and swiped the razor in one unbroken stroke from ear to ear. "I'm goin' to town," he said savagely, "to whale the livin' tripe out of Danny Drenning if he's there foolin' around! Lucile! What d'you guys think I've been trying to get back here for anyhow?"

Nobody laughed.

THE END



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Dynamite Buzzard

by ELIOT TODD

The Boche blazed down, Spandaus flaming.



Two men's lives were an easy price for control of a vital sector—but Gibson thought it a lousy deal! He paid, instead, with the roaring brand of courage and signed his receipt in Blood!

MAJOR BARRETT, C. O. of the 94th Pursuits, jammed down the receiver of the phone and glanced up at the group of nine sun-bronzed pilots clustered around his desk.

"That was D. H. Q. confirming Wings' orders!" he rapped. "Here's the dope, men," he continued after a moment. "Tomorrow at 5 a. m. the 3rd and 9th Yank Divisions will make a concentrated

attempt to iron out the Boche spear-head in the Arcis le Ponsard salient. If they succeed, and they probably will, every pound of supplies they need to hold their new position must come through Lysle!"

The C. O. stepped over to a large-scale wall map and placed a stubby forefinger on the hub of half a dozen railroads.

"It's our job," he continued, "to protect this rail-head from all enemy aircraft approaching out of the south-east and east. A British S. E. 5 outfit will handle the northerly patrols. We'll continue operating as a two flight squadron, flying alternately two hour patrols, beginning immediately. Gibson, you'll remain leader of 'A'. Any questions?"

The only answer was a buzz of excitement on the part of the nine pilots. After a moment the C. O. abruptly whipped up a pencil and stabbed it at a rangy, clean-limbed pilot with a reckless smile on his thin lips.

"Get this, Gibson!" he snapped. "And it goes for the rest of you birds, too," he added, including the rest of the men with a quick gesture. "Forget you've been an offensive outfit. No matter what happens, stay put! If any of you bust formation—I don't give a damn what the reason is—or if you, Gibson, can't forget your private war with von Machster and go off on a Boche hunt," Barrett thumped the desk until the ink well bounced, "by God, I'll transfer you into the ditch-diggers! Is that clear?"

Chris Gibson felt the hot blood color his face.

"Hell, skipper," he grinned lamely. "Just because we varied our course a few miles once or twice to get a couple of cracks at von Machster you talk as though we made a habit of washing out orders. This is a different proposition, sir. You don't think we're going to let down two Yank divisions for the sake of a little

amusement, do you?"

Barrett stared up with worried eyes at the young pilot.

"No, I don't," he said finally. "Hell, I'm sorry, men," he blurted impulsively. "You must think I'm getting to be a jittery old dodo. But Wing's put it squarely up to us and it makes my guts crawl when I think of what would happen if we failed to hold up our end. Here," Barrett yanked out a bottle and sent it skidding across his desk. "Have a couple of shots all around. You take off," he glanced at a rusty alarm clock at his elbow, "in exactly fifteen minutes. Keep your tails clear and—best of luck!"

Three miles to the north, a thousand feet over the rolling sea of dense clouds, ten S. E. 5's wheeled gracefully around and droned back over their course.

Hunching forward in the Spad's cramped pit Lieutenant Chris Gibson strained his eyes towards Germany and muttered a curse.

"A hell of a way for an able-bodied guy to fight a war," he growled. "Up and down, back and forth for the last two hours and not a Boche within miles. I might just as well be rolling bandages back in the Ladies' Aid."

He closed his eyes for a second to rest his aching eyeballs, then twisted around to inspect the tight V formation of Spads strung out behind him. Bill Baxter, flying number two, grinned over and thumbed his nose. Chris grinned back, then yelled with relief at the sight of nine Spads edging up out of the south.

"Come on, B!" he whooped impatiently. "Another five minutes of this and I'll be nuts!"

Chris faced around to reach for the throttle—and jolted upright. A great puff-ball of black smoke had suddenly enveloped the S. E. 5's! There was a vicious stab of red flame at the core and then the blazing, twisted wreckage of the

British ships was plummeting to earth.

"My God!" he gasped. "A direct hit by a Boche A. A.! And what a shell! The Krauts must have shifted Big Bertha to their anti-aircraft service. Say!" he bellowed at a sudden thought. "That new gun emplacement over near Vessey may be the answer! Come on, Yanks!"

Waving a greeting at B, Chris rocked his wings and slammed on the stick. Motors trumpeting, the nine Spads plunged down through the yellow mist and into the clear. Banking steeply, they streaked off towards Bocheland.

Five minutes later, as the German reserve lines eased by his trucks, he snatched up binoculars and trained them on a small crescent-shaped field he had noticed on a previous patrol. Sure enough, the same three trucks were lined up on the field, near a dense clump of trees in one of the horn-like corners of the clearing. He twisted the adjustment to get a sharper focus.

"Something phoney down there," he muttered. "Trees don't grow like that. I—Cripes!" he yelled excitedly as he picked out the long barrel of a camouflaged gun. "Wing'll be plenty interested in that!"

Making a careful note of the location Chris belted the throttle and kicked on rudder. Instantly the nose of the Spad swung westward—and into a vicious burst of Spandaus steel! Chris glanced up and ripped out a curse at the ten green striped Fokkers diving full gun on the Yank formation.

"Von Machster!" he roared into the Hissos blast. "Give 'em hell, Yanks!"

Instantly the sky was filled with the screams of laboring motors and the raucous clatter of machine gun fire. Chris kicked the Spad after a green striped devil sitting on a Yank's tail. With a crazy yell he clenched the trips. Tracers lanced by the Fokker's cockpit. Alarmed,

the Boche glanced back—to take a ten round burst between the eyes. His head bobbed, then shattered into a crimson pulp. Yawing, his ship locked wings with a zooming Fokker. Their tanks went up with a surge of flame, blasting the ships apart in mid-air. Chris yanked on the stick and tore after a white-faced Boche.

The next instant a plummeting tangle of wreckage missed his prop by inches. Fokker wings wrapped around the grey belly of a Spad! Grimly he kicked the rocketing ship straight into the maelstrom of rolling, spinning ships. The odds were against the Boches now. Against them in numbers, yes, but not in experience. He looked for the fledgling, Cross.

THE kid was in a bad way. A Fokker clung to his tail, following every clumsy manouever of the fledgling's crate, flaying the Yank ship with a Spandaus lash. Suddenly the Spad's tail section collapsed, weakened by the stream of Spandaus slugs. Helpless, the kid lifted his scared face to meet the death burst.

The killer in Chris went berserk. Shrieking curses he rapped the throttle and booted the trembling ship onto the Fokker's tail. Down—down—down! But the Boche, warned by a sixth sense that death stalked his tail, flung back a glance. Instantly he pulled up in a screaming zoom, half-rolled kicked into a spin. But the Spad struck like a rattler, Vickers snarling spewing death into the striped fuselage. Desperately the Boche jerked on stick. The weakened wing buckled, sheared off. Resistance gone, the fuselage streaked to earth, Mercedes shrieking like a tortured demon.

But even as Chris zoomed up two Spads plunged down in power spins, tails whipping, Hissos blasting. Chris caught a swift impression of the numbers on the ships.

"Baxter and Williams!" he grated. "Damn you, von Machster!"

Snarling, he picked a green striped target. But before he could trip his Vickers a hail of steel smashed into the floor boards. As the splinters leaped up he felt a white hot lance stab his leg. Smothering a groan he whipped around in a split ess and glanced down.

Not fifty feet below a Fokker stood on its tail, Spandaus belching flame and steel. As the Spad pivoted Chris saw the Fokker's insignia—a grinning skull transfixed by a bloody dagger. Von Machster himself!

Chris rapped the throttle and spun in a half turn. The Spad plunged, came boring in on von Machster's flank. Fokker stalling, the Boche ace was caught cold. Frantically he worked stick and rudder. But the Fokker was already mushing—falling into a spin. Chris jabbed the trips. Tracers slashed through the Fokker's tail section—ripped their way towards the pit.

But now von Machster had flying speed. He hauled up in a dizzy loop, half-rolled and roared towards the lines. Chris drummed his fist against the Spad's cockpit.

"So that's the idea!" he snarled. "Trying to take a run-out, eh?"

At even odds the Fokker was faster but Chris had the altitude. He belted throttle and leaned on the stick. Slowly the Spad began to gain. Suddenly von Machster jerked back a glance, then whipped into a vertical bank. Green stripes slashed through Chris' sight ring. He booted right rudder and squeezed the trips. Yank steel smashed into the churning Mercedes. The motor quit, ignition shattered.

Easing off, Chris followed von Machster down, hoping the Boche would be forced past the Yank lines. But as the German trenches slid by, von Machster kicked the Fokker into a reckless slip, leveled off and crashed into the wire two

hundred yards from the Boche trenches. Chris roared down to see von Machster's motionless body huddled in the pit. Though he was tempted to land, he realized that to set down on that shell-pitted, wire-tangled earth would be suicide. So with a final look at the wreck he cut back towards the milling ships. But as he zoomed up the remaining Fokkers banked sharply and high-tailed it for Germany. Chris glared at the retreating ships, rapidly fading in the distance.

"Run, damn you while you're able!" he growled. "Next time you won't be so lucky!"

After a glance at the gas gauge Chris signaled the flight home and ruddered the Spad towards the Yank lines.

When the six battered Spads rolled up on the 94th's apron Chris' rigger sided up to the pit and cupped his hands against the pilot's ear.

"Old man wants to see you," he shouted. "On the double!"

Chris nodded and cut the switch. A few moments later he was facing Barrett in Operations.

"What's this about the S. E. 5's?" the C. O. clipped. "Wing just reported the whole flight washed out!"

Chris sank into the C. O.'s chair and wrapped a handkerchief around the slug crease in his thigh.

"Damnedest thing I ever saw!" he grunted. "Looked like a high caliber shell hit 'em. As soon as 'B' showed up we cut out and headed towards the lines to investigate. Had a brush with von Machster. We lost three ships. Ware locked wings with a Fokker. Baxter and Williams went down either dead or out of control. Funny thing, too," he added. "It's not like von Machster to jump a full strength formation. His meat is an observation bus or a couple of lonely pursuits."

Barrett tapped the desk thoughtfully

for a moment then shot a keen glance at the pilot.

"Just where was it he jumped you?" he demanded.

Chris started.

"Maybe that explains it!" he rapped swiftly. "We'd finished inspecting a new gun emplacement in Section 918," he located the gun's exact position on the C. O.'s map, "and were heading back when he dropped down on us. Looks like he tried to prevent us getting away with the dope. What other reason—"

Chris stopped short as a buff-colored Cadillac drew up outside the shack. A moment later the door flew open and Colonel Ryder, the grizzly-headed Wing C. O. stamped into the room. Chris and Barrett jumped to attention. The Colonel made an impatient gesture.

"Never mind that stuff, men!" he snapped. "No time for formalities. Barrett," he shot a glance at the C. O. "I got a report one of your pilots shot down von Machster in the wire near Vessey. Is that right?"

Barrett motioned for Chris to explain.

"Right, sir!" Chris rapped. "It was this way. We—"

"Never mind!" the Colonel cut in. "I don't give a damn how you did it. Just wanted to establish the fact. But I suppose it really doesn't matter much now. Von Machster escaped!"

"Escaped!" Chris exploded. "Nuts! He crashed with a wide open motor. It isn't possible!"

"I said he escaped!" the Colonel roared, glaring at Chris. "As near as we can guess he made his way back to the lines under cover of a barrage the Boche sent up right after the crash. Anyway, when one of our patrols was finally able to reach his ship he was gone and the plane was completely destroyed. The patrol, however, made one important discovery."

STEPPING over to the door the Colonel barked some instructions to his chauffeur. A moment later the driver handed him a small, heavy object, loosely wrapped. The Colonel placed it on Barrett's desk and stripped off the paper.

"This was found mounted to what was left of von Machster's cowlings," he began. "Through some fluke it escaped destruction in the shelling. At first we thought it was some new kind of an optical instrument," he continued, pointing at the complicated system of lenses and prisms. "But it took G-2 to discover its purpose. This, gentlemen, is an electronic range-finder, capable of penetrating fog and mist—even darkness!"

Chris' mind raced back to the British ships. Suddenly the breath whistled through his lips.

"That explains how the S. E. 5's were knocked down!" he blurted. "They were above the clouds—hidden from any A. A. battery. Yet they were destroyed by a direct hit! The Jerries have developed a powerful, new anti-aircraft gun that's ranged automatically by this gadget, no doubt about it! Von Machster was probably trying to adapt it to their ships.

"Think what that would mean, sir! Bombers could spot their objectives by night almost as easily as by day. The whole problem of flying in darkness or through fog would be practically solved! God knows the range-finder's going to raise enough hell with us as it is, but if they can adapt it to their aviation, we might as well throw in the sponge!

"Look, sir!" Chris continued, pointing at the calibrated dials at the base of the instrument. "It gives them all the dope—altitude, speed, direction, drift. It's almost a sure thing that the first shell will be a direct hit!"

Colonel Ryder stared intently at the instrument, then paled noticeably.

"By God, Lieutenant, I believe you're

right!" he said hoarsely. "Why, it means they can sweep the skies of our ships. Why, it's—it's damnable!"

"It's more than damnable!" Barrett rapped tersely. "Suppose the Jerries should knock down our patrols over Lysle and then bomb the rail-head! It would be a cinch—with no opposition. And you know what the destruction of that rail-head would mean, especially now!"

Chalk-white, the Colonel sank back in his chair. Suddenly all three men jumped at the jangle of the phone. The C. O. cursed and flipped up the receiver.

"Barrett speaking!" he snapped. "What's that?" His face tensed. Then after a pause: "O. K., thanks!"

He swung around.

"Boche plane headed this way. Carries a skull and dagger insignia!"

Chris bounded out of his chair.

"Gangway!" he yelled. "That's von Machster!"

Leaping through the door he raced across the drome and flung himself into the nearest Spad.

"Swing that stick!" he bellowed to a startled mechanic. As the Hisso blasted Chris raised his arm. Greaseballs jerked the chock ropes and the next instant the little ship was skimming across the field.

As the Spad clawed up Chris strained his eyes over the pounding motor. Suddenly a black dot appeared and a moment later he made out the razor-like edges of the wings.

"A Rumper!" he muttered. "What the hell is von Machster doing in a two seater?"

At full gun the two ships raced towards each other. With slitted eyes Chris reached for the loading handles. But even as he grasped the trips his heart leaped in his chest. Strapped together in the rear pit of the Boche crate were two figures in familiar khaki! As the Rump-

ler roared by he recognized the pale, bloody faces of the two Yanks who had spun down behind the Boche lines!

"Baxter and Williams!" he rasped. "Damn you, Kraut, what kind of a lousy trick is this?"

Wrenching the Spad around he tore after the German ship, which was now almost over the 94th's field. As the Spad edged up von Machster leered over his shoulder and motioned for Chris to land. Then abruptly he reached down and brought up a message container. After repeating his instructions he flung the container over the side and banked toward the lines.

Torn between two courses Chris ripped out a puzzled curse. Should he land for the message or follow von Machster? Baxter settled the question. Half-facing around he motioned down at the 94th's drome. Chris waved in reply and slammed the stick forward.

As the Spad rolled to a stop in front of Operations Barrett rushed up, a sheet of paper fluttering in his hand. Without a word he handed the message to the Yank pilot:

To the Commanding Officer,
94th Pursuit Squadron:

Unfortunately, the rescuers who assisted me from my wrecked Fokker neglected to remove a certain object, which I understand is now in the possession of your G.H.Q. Unless this object is dropped via parachute over my drome within the hour, Lieuts. Baxter and Williams, who, as you recently saw, are alive and well, will be executed without further delay.

Should Lieut. Gibson choose to act as messenger, he will find me ready to give him satisfaction at 2000 meters over my drome.

von Machster

Chris crumpled the message in his fist and leaped to the ground.

"Get me a bagful of Mills bombs and service this ship!" he barked at a wide-

eyed greaseball. "I'm taking off in two minutes!"

Barrett grasped Chris' arm as Colonel Ryder started over from the Operations shack.

"It's only another damned Boche trick!" he rasped. "Good God, Chris, don't you know von Machster well enough by this time!"

Chris whirled.

"To hell with von Machster!" he grated. "How about Baxter and Williams? You don't think I'm going to let him murder them in cold blood, do you? Step aside, Barrett! I've got important business!"

But before Chris could make a move Colonel Ryder shoved himself between the junior officers.

"Here, here, men!" he clipped. "Remember we're fighting the enemy—not each other. Now, what's the trouble?"

Chris smoothed out the crumpled message. Reading it at a glance the Colonel turned to Barrett.

"WELL, what's the argument?" he grunted. "We've got the range-finder, haven't we? And without that the Boche are licked, at least for a few days. And by that time our own experts will be able to duplicate it—maybe improve on it! We're sitting pretty. Gibson, your idea of returning the range-finder borders on treachery! What are two lives compared to thousands?"

"You're both crazy!" Chris blazed. "Who said anything about returning the damned range-finder? I'm going for Baxter and Williams and I'll bring them back or bust a gut!"

Years suddenly fell from the Colonel's sagging shoulders. For a moment the fire of youth blazed in his war-tired eyes.

"Here's luck, son!" he roared as Chris leaped for the pit. "By God, if I was thirty years younger I'd tag along myself!"

Five minutes later a lone Spad rocketed across the lines, boring straight into Germany. Picking up a landmark under the ship's nose, Chris banked gently toward the northeast and strained forward. Suddenly his eyes narrowed as a darker smudge on the approaching carpet slid under the leading edges. Von Machster's drome! A second later Chris went rigid.

Squatting on the edge of the field, near a dense growth of trees, was von Machster's Rumpler! Six men stood next to the ship. Four Boches in field grey and two Yanks in blood-stained khaki! Chris felt the hot blood pound at his temples.

"Hang on, Yanks!" he roared. "Here's where hell busts loose!"

Hisso bellowing, the Spad plummeted down, leveled off with bowing wings and went blasting over the drome. Chris jabbed the trips. With the steel whining over their heads the four Boches whirled and leaped for the trees. Chris streaked over the Rumpler, kicked around and set down. Before the ship had stopped rolling he was out of the pit and legging it towards the Yanks, who were lashed to the Rumpler's wing. As Chris rushed up he could see Baxter straining desperately at his bonds.

"Go back, Chris! For God's sake get out of here!" he croaked. "It's a trap! Hurry—"

Baxter's last word was lost in the bark of a Luger. Chris jerked to a halt as the slug whistled past his head. A second later the same four Boches plunged into view, firing as they came. Chris whirled. The Spad was fifty yards away with a stalled motor. Common sense told him an attempt to escape would be suicide. He turned with arms overhead just as a putty-faced *Oberleutnant* rushed up. The Boche jabbed a Luger into his ribs and motioned with his head.

"Schnell!" he growled. "Von Mach-

ster may wish a word with you. He may even thank you for furnishing him with a few minutes of diversion!"

At Luger points the Yanks were forced across the drome toward a low, one-story building that evidently served as von Machster's headquarters. Deserted a moment ago, the field now hummed with activity. Pilots, mechanics and orderlies streamed from hangars and barracks to stare curiously at the captured Yanks. Once inside the building the *Oberleutnant* shoved them down a narrow corridor and into a businesslike office. Seated behind a large desk, facing the door, was a stocky, hard-eyed Air Service officer. Though he wore no insignia of rank, Chris recognized him instantly by the livid scar that divided his chin. Only a matter of hours ago he had seen that same scar, then like a crimson welt on his jaw, beneath triangular goggles. Von Machster! At the Yanks' entrance the German leaped up and bowed with exaggerated politeness.

"I am honored, Lieutenant," he smirked. "Moreover, I fear that I am eternally indebted to you for your magnificent, single-handed attempt to rescue your comrades, who are so lucky, or shall we say unlucky?—as to be my guests."

Von Machster paused for a moment, staring intently at the Yank. Suddenly he leaned forward.

"So, *dummkopf!*" he grated, pretense vanishing as anger clouded his face, "you thought it would be easy to fool me, eh? Well, *schwein!*" he snarled, "though you tried to trick me, like a sportsman I shall keep my word. In a few minutes hence we will meet in combat. But first I shall draw the fangs from your Vickers! You see," he leered up at the lean pilot, "I never take chances, except—how do you say it?—on a sure thing!"

Chris' lips curved in contempt.

"That's just about your speed, von

Machster," he said curtly. "I suppose there's a string like that to all your victories!"

Anger flitted across the Boche's face, but a moment later his features relaxed into the same leer.

"Ten Allied ships have fallen before my guns," he shrugged. "My methods bring results. You will find that out—"

VON MACHSTER broke off abruptly as the popping of a motorcycle's exhaust sounded through the open window. Seconds later a dust-powdered staff officer entered. Striding across the room he carefully placed a package on von Machster's desk and saluted.

"We have finally duplicated the range-finder, *excellenz!*" he announced. "The orders are for you to fly it to the new gun. It will be installed immediately by experts already there!"

Von Machster seized the package.

"*Gut!*" he rumbled, hurrying towards the door. "I take off at once! Streiber," he paused at the threshold and addressed the *oberleutnant*. "Hold the Yankees here. I return soon!"

With a meaning glance at Chris, von Machster swung out of the room, followed by the staff officer and the *oberleutnant*. After rapping out instructions to a guard, the three men hurried out of the building.

In a few terse sentences Chris outlined the events to Baxter and Williams. As he finished a Mercedes blasted on the line. A glance through the window showed von Machster's Fokker pounding across the field. Chris had one leg over the sill, about to make a rush for the crates on the line, when Baxter grabbed his arm.

"Watch it!" he hissed, pointing to the muzzle of a Mauser projecting from the corner of the building.

Escape cut off from that direction,

Chris drew back with a muttered curse. As the sound of von Machster's motor faded into the distance the phone gave a short, faint ring. With a warning gesture Chris snatched off the receiver.

"Allo!" he growled into the mouthpiece. "Ja, ja. This is he!"

Breathless, the two Yanks waited in tense silence while the receiver rasped and vibrated. Suddenly Chris nodded his head and smiled faintly.

"Kapitan von Machster is about to leave," he mumbled thickly. "I will see that he gets the message, *excellenz!*"

Chris slammed down the receiver.

"That was the Boche General Staff!" he rapped swiftly. "They're planning to blast the Yank patrols over Lysle out of the air with that gun and then send over a dozen Gothas to bomb the rail-head!"

Williams gasped.

"That means the 94th will get it! They're on patrol now!"

Chris swore softly.

"You said it, Yank!" he clipped. "We've got to get out of here—or else!"

Chris racked his brain. Escape through the window was impossible. There was only one other way out of the room, the door. But a guard stood in the corridor with a ready Mauser.

His brain working at top speed, Chris glanced about the room. A newly installed wash basin in one corner caught his eye. Under the sink was a litter of plumbers' tools, and a short length of iron pipe. With a gasp of relief Chris snatched up the pipe, rolled it in a large sheet of paper from von Machster's desk and rapped on the door.

"Achung!" he snapped, grinning at Baxter. "Von Machster forgot the gun installation plan. You had better see that it is delivered to him!"

Muttering indecisively for a moment, the guard finally turned the key and

reached in for what he thought was the blueprint.

Crack! With bone-crushing force the pipe crashed against his skull. The guard went down with a grunt, sprawled on the floor. Baxter leaped across the corridor and flipped open the opposite door. Chris and Williams heaved the body of the Boche into the room and twisted the key. Striding across the room Chris jerked up the sash and leaned out. So close that he could almost touch it was the wall of a wood framed, canvas hangar. The space between the two buildings was unguarded.

Motioning for the other Yanks to follow, Chris vaulted to the ground and cautiously raised the canvas wall. A moment later Baxter and Williams joined him and together the Yanks crawled into the hangar. Pausing for a moment to accustom their eyes to the semi-darkness, they started for the front of the hangar, where the Spad and the Rumpler had been hastily rolled. Halfway to the Spad Williams gripped Chris' arm.

"There's somebody working on your guns, Chris!" he hissed, pointing to a shadowy figure bent over the Spad's cowling. Chris smothered a curse. The Boche was removing the cartridges from the Vickers belts!

Inching forward the last few feet Chris suddenly leaped up and sprang. The Boche whirled to defend himself. But before he could make a move the Yank's fist smacked against his jaw. The man toppled backwards, tripped, struck his head on the Spad's hub and lay still.

Chris wiped the blood from his knuckles and turned to Baxter.

"Look the Rumpler over while I reload!" he rapped, scooping up a handful of cartridges. "Something tells me von Machster's number is on one of these slugs. I don't want to leave any of 'em behind!"

As Baxter and Williams disappeared in the direction of the Rumpler, Chris leaped up on the wing step and began jamming the shells into the belts. He worked with furious haste, so absorbed in his task that he failed to notice a figure flit through the hangar door. Seconds later a slight jar against the Spad's wing caused him to whirl and leap to the ground. But even as his feet touched the earth a Luger was jabbed into his back.

"Silence, pig!" a voice hissed. "Make a move and I blow out your heart!"

With his mind working like lightning Chris elevated his arms and turned slowly to face the same *oberleutnant*. The Boche flourished the gun.

"YOU'RE quite clever at taking other person's telephone messages. *Hein?*" he smirked. "You made only one slight mistake, however. Von Machster is not a Captain, as you referred to him. He is a Major! The General Staff became suspicious at once and demanded a confirmation. Naturally, I investigated, after relaying the orders to the gun crew," he smiled exultantly. "This time you will find it not so easy to escape! But first the others. You have exactly three seconds, Lieutenant," the Boche's finger curled on the trigger, "to answer my question! Where are your comrades?"

Chris stalled for time. He had an almost uncontrollable desire to glance over at the Rumpler and shout a warning at the Yanks. But least he betray their position he riveted his eyes on the German.

"Figure it out for yourself!" he shrugged. "Or find them and ask them."

The Boche scowled.

"You make a joke on me, *hein?*" he snarled. "Very good. You have one last chance." He leered at Chris and tapped the pistol suggestively. "Then the joke is on you!"

As he raised the gun a trip-hammer blast of lead from the Rumpler's Parabellum drummed into his back! The German reeled, then collapsed, face frozen in a look of foolish surprise. Chris whirled at a shout from Baxter.

"Thought I'd never get wise to this damned gun!" he yelled apologetically.

"Forget it!" Chris bellowed. "Von Machster has orders to cut loose with the gun as soon as possible. Every second counts! Let's go!"

Leaping for the Spad's pit he flipped the switch and swung the prop. Once, twice, three times he pulled it through. The Hisso coughed, sucked air. Clammy sweat beaded his forehead. Grating a curse at the balky motor he heaved with all his strength. With a deafening blast the Hisso kicked to life. Vaulting into the ship he jerked back a look. The Rumpler was already rolling forward with Baxter at the controls. Williams was straining to open the hangar door. Suddenly the door let go, slid back.

Motors thundering, stacks belching fire, the two ships swept outside. An officer shouted a command and whipped up a Luger. The gun barked twice, then slipped from his nerveless fingers as Williams hosed a stream of lead into the Boche's body.

Chris ruddered the Spad out on the field, kicked the hurtling ship towards the runway. For six hellish seconds he blasted his way through a curtain of Boche steel, building up terrific momentum. As the edge of the field loomed up he heaved on the stick. Motors blaring, the ships flung themselves into the air, banked steeply, roared into the east.

Five minutes later the crescent-shaped field slipped under their wings. A fleet of motor trucks loaded with gleaming brass shells were lined up next to the gun emplacement. A short distance away Chris made out the striped wings of von

Machster's Fokker, prop still ticking over. Muttering a prayer, he plunged his arm under the seat. For a long second his heart stopped beating, then looped wildly as his fingers closed around the bag of Mills bombs, overlooked by the Boches.

Waving to Baxter, Chris rammed open the throttle and kicked up the Spad's tail. Wires shrieking, the two ships dove like meteors from space. As the blast of their motors reached the men working on the gun von Machster leaped up and raced towards the Fokker. He threw himself into the ship and the next moment the Fokker was skimming across the field. Chris smiled grimly and tapped the rudder.

The field seemed to leap up at him. 500 feet! 300! 150! He yanked on the stick and squeezed the trips. With yammering guns and groaning wings the ships leveled off and roared over the field. Under the hail of steel the Boches went down like tenpins. As the Spad thundered over the gun Chris' arm went up—then down.

Bar-o-o-o-m! Bar-o-o-o-m!

Hurting straight to their mark, the two bombs exploded against the gun breech, shattering the delicate mechanism, destroying in a split instant the result of months of Boche labor.

With a yell of triumph Chris hauled back on the stick. Wings bowing, the Spad leaped up in a brain-reeling zoom. Suddenly he remembered,—Von Machster!

His answer was a screaming burst of steel that crashed through the Spad's center section. Chris slammed over stick just as the Boche flashed down, his leering face pressed close to the bucking Spandaus.

"Get ready to take it, Kraut!" he grated. "Here I come!"

But the German was already at the

top of a zoom. Winging over he came slashing down with flaming guns. Chris jerked the Spad around, but not in time to avoid a blast through his tail section. Frustrated, insane with hate, von Machster flew like a maniac gone berserk. The Boche was all over the sky, his blazing Spandaus burning up the air, lashing burst after burst into the Yank ship.

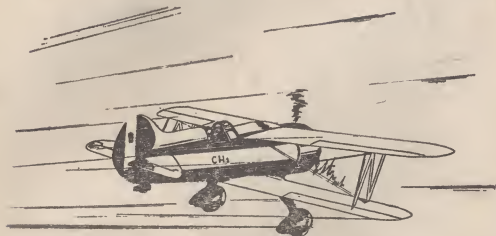
With a groan Chris brushed off his filmed goggles, wiped the blinding, spurted blood from his eyes. Before him the sky was a roaring, red haze. The Spad faltered. Von Machster lunged down.

In the Rumpel Williams cursed and swung the Parabellum. But before he could line up the Fokker in his sights the Spad leaped suddenly to life! Hisso belching smoke, the tiny crate flipped upright, plunged down, building up momentum. The Yanks could see Chris' blood-smeared face above the wind screen, lips drawn back in a snarl, eyes half closed against the air blast.

With a wing-bending zoom the Spad howled up, flopped over, plummeted down. Still believing the Vickers belts were empty, von Machster fumbled the play. Intending to rake the belly of the Spad as it flashed overhead, he stood the Fokker on its tail. It was the move Chris had gambled on. The Spad's nose dropped. Sight wires crossed on von Machster's black helmet! Yelling and cursing Chris jabbed the trips. Yank steel crashed into the Boche's chest, whipped it into a bloody froth. The Fokker slipped back, fell off on a wing. Then, with von Machster's body thrashing in the pit, it spun down to eternity.

As the Yanks thundered off towards Lysle, Chris lowered his goggles and leaned overside.

"So long, bum!" he roared. "How do you like a sure thing—when it backfires!"



Italian Caproni Chioda C.H.1

Most people are aware of the Italian Caproni, but if you aren't, you need only ask the Ethiopians. Those gallant and unfortunate Africans saw a quite a bit of the Capronis during the Italian-Ethiopian campaign in the Spring of 1936, and even more recently, these planes have appeared over the distressed and far flung battlefields of modern Spain.

It is just about Italy's best, although it falls far short of other planes to be mentioned in this series as time goes on. Its top speed of 273 m.p.h. is scarcely startling, but it must be taken into consideration that this Caproni is a bi-plane. It reminds us quite a bit of the old Laird racers, although its added horsepower, granted by means of the 14 cylinder Gnome-Rhone radial, makes it a much faster and more formidable ship than the old Laird. Its speed is also assisted by a three-bladed controllable pitch propeller.

The ailerons are fitted to all four of its bi-plane wings, and, as is obvious from the above illustration, a single bay N-strut arrangement and external wires are used for bracing the wings. The entire plane is fabric covered, while the tail group is fitted with balanced control surfaces. The wheels are in streamline pants, and are equipped with oleo shock absorbers and brakes.

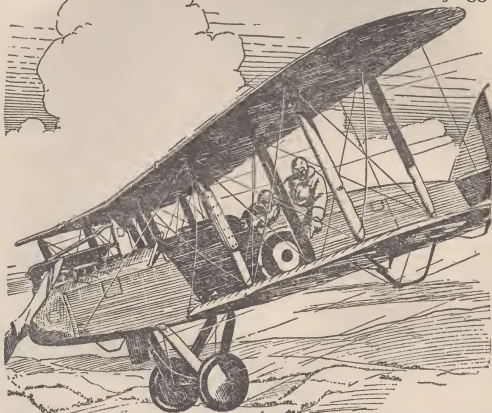
Its cockpit furnishings are the same as that of all the Italian planes, consisting of parachute, fire extinguisher, oxygen equipment, compressed air starter, electrical apparatus and two-way radio. It is armed with two 7.7 Breda-Safat synchronized machine guns. Specifications are:

Engine	780 h.p. at 15,580 feet
Speed	273 m.p.h. at 15,580 feet
Climb	19,840 feet in six minutes
Span	28' 2½"
Length	23' 5½"
Height	9' 6"

Flying Screwballs

by William

O'Sullivan and Joe Gregg



Butch pointed to the column of tanks.

Here is a story of fine intention—
Of genius at large in the Fourth
Dimension.

McFee and Izard—we're forced to
mention,
Are the slug-nutty bums who com-
mand our attention.

IVORY Izard muscled the decrepit D.
H. into what should have been a
climbing turn; but there was no climb
to it. The aged bus slowly depressed one
of its dull wings, raised its snout reluctant-

ly, and abjectly spent five hundred feet of altitude.

The veteran Ivory Izard read the tachometer with glum eyes. He throttled down on the gruesome medley of clanks and squeaks and whistles that were merged with and audible above the explosions of the motor.

Ivory ruddered out of the sideslip and turned to Butch McFee, Yank pilot who doubled as Ivory's gunner. McFee's bored eyes turned from their indifferent inspection of the landscape nine thousand feet below.

"This ain't a motor," Ivory shouted. "This is a cement mixer! Boy, listen to those valves whistle!"

"You listen to 'em," Butch yelled back. "It's your fault we're in this egg-crate. Just imagine—Butch McFee trottin' around over France in an old cloud ark, playin' stooge to a camera! An' for why? Why, I ask you?"

"I can't hear a word you're saying," Ivory yelled. "And anyway, if you're no better with a camera than you are with a machine gun, the Frog tin-typers won't have to worry much about their jobs."

"Yeah, you can't hear me," Butch jeered. "Well—you could hear what the British Brass Hat said when the court-martial was over! 'Assigned to the Thirteenth Allied Special Squadron'. You could hear that, couldn't you?"

Ivory shrugged. "Can I help it if that Colonel didn't know how to say his own name? What would you do if you thought you had a spy trapped? Just what I did—tie him to a chair and go get some help!"

Butch yapped: "I'd make sure he wasn't a British Staff Officer, for one thing. Holy Cat, what a dopey play that was! You must o'been plenty plastered!"

"Not so plenty," Ivory argued. "The guy told me his name was 'Chumley', didn't he? He was actin' funny, anyhow, I thought. But maybe I only *thought* so. Anyhow, when I saw that envelope he

pulled out, with that name 'Cholmondeley,' and he said it was *his*, I thought I had something."

Butch snorted: "You had something all right. Only, it was like having a skunk at a garden party. Gosh, Ivory, you *know* the English say things different than we do in America. 'C-h-o-l-m-o-n-d-e-l-e-y,' in England, is pronounced 'C-h-u-m-l-e-y'."

"Don't keep tellin' me that, will you?" Ivory begged. "That's all I heard in that court-martial — 'Chol-mon-de-ley' *ain't* 'Cholmondeley', it's 'Chumley'. Well, how the hell do they say 'Chumley'—'Chol-mon-de-ley'?"

"Aw, forget it," Butch said. "I'm sick and tired of hearing it, myself. The point is, you got suspicious of a British Staff Intelligence Officer—a spy for us, no less!—and you tie him up as a *German* spy and belt him silly when he hollers. So now we're headed to the Devil's Island of the Air—The Thirteenth Squadron. 'Peck's Bad Boys', they call 'em. Us, the first two Yank pilots in France, bein' assigned to an outfit like that! We're a disgrace to our uniform!"

"I'm not," Ivory told him. "These sound like a bunch of good guys we're headed for. You wait and see—we'll do something big."

Butch sighed, "We'll probably end up by slappin' handcuffs on Pershing and the president of France, and spend the rest of our lives in Leavenworth. Hey, Ivory—what's that down there?"

Izard kidded the D. H. into a steep bank and stared down at the group of drab, uncamouflaged buildings that huddled disconsolately about a moth-eaten field. He glanced at the map on his knee-board.

"That's her," he sighed. "Man, that field has Thirteen written all over it—the S. O. L. Squadron of the Western Front! 'Surely Outa Luck' Squadron!"

"Or somethin'," Butch said. "Try and land this aerial barn all in one piece, will

you, Ivory? Don't cut that gun too fast!"

Ivory grunted. Thousands of hours in the air as a veteran civilian pilot before the war had equipped him with air brains which compensated somewhat for his lack of them in other respects.

"Anything that has a motor is my meat," he said. "Just lie back and Mrs. Izard's little boy Ivory will do his stuff."

"You got crust callin' that clankin' hunk of iron up there a motor," Butch said, "but go right ahead. I got a hunch we're all washed up with this war, anyhow."

Ivory coiled the ancient sky-hulk down in a neat spiral and feathered it onto the tarmac. So nicely did he judge his speed that the D. H. rolled to a stop dead on the hangar line. A group of some twenty men straggled out to view the newcomers. Ivory and Butch slipped down from their pits and peeled off their helmets and goggles.

"For the love of Mike!" Butch said. "Look at all those different uniforms! French—Italian—Spanish—Polish—British—Russian—and now us, Yanks! Boy, this is a regular Foreign Legion of the Air!"

Ivory said, "They're certainly a funny lookin' mob. But what in hell are they grinning at us for?"

IZARD didn't consider that they, themselves, presented a picture that appealed to the humor of these men from all nations. Ivory, short, bow-legged and husky, with his close-cropped tow-colored hair and comically serious, sun-blackened face; and Butch McFee, huge, black haired and red-faced.

A tall, blond man in the uniform of a British flying major, apparently in his late twenties, stepped forward.

"Mr. Izard, I presume?" he asked. "And Mr. McFee? Welcome to the Thirteenth Squadron, gentlemen. I am Major Smith, commanding." As Ivory and Butch stepped forward to meet him, he added:

"And it's spelled S-m-i-t-h, Mr. Izard."

The assembled officers roared. Butch said, "I guess that bonehead play of yours is all over the world, by now. You ought to be a flight commander here, at least, Ivory."

Ivory was more practical. "Pleased to make your acquaintance, Major," he said. "What'll we do about getting this plane into better flying condition? Can you put your mechanics on it now? It needs a complete overhaul."

Major Smith smiled thinly, and his humorous eyes clouded. "I don't think you need to worry about that, Izard. Your ship is about obsolete."

Ivory beamed. "Oh! Then, we get a new plane? That's swell!"

But Major Smith shook his head. "No Izard. You get no new plane. And you get no mechanics to overhaul this one. They call 'Thirteen' a squadron, but it's really a scrap heap. We have no mechanics, you see. In a word, gentlemen—Thirteen Squadron is completely obsolete!"

Ivory and Butch stared slack-jawed at the lean Britisher.

Butch said, "But, Major! How about our—our photographic work? How about our protection while we are out getting shots of enemy artillery, and such?"

Ivory had recovered somewhat. "It's a gag," he told Butch. "This is just some high-powered ribbing we're getting."

"Indeed, it is not," Major Smith told them. "As you know, we are fifty miles from the Front. That doesn't sound like action, does it? Secondly, we have no regular assignments. Men are sent here—and some are recalled, but very seldom. Usually, my pilots tire of the inactivity and resign their commissions to enlist in their armies as private soldiers."

Ivory was still doubtful. "But, Major, why don't they fire them outright?" he asked. "Wouldn't that be simpler?"

Major Smith nodded. "Certainly. But we have one distinction here at Thirteen.

Every man in it has some influence. Either he is well fixed politically in his own country, and so cannot be punished in the usual manner; or, as is true in your case, officers on detached duty from troops of another country are handled in this manner, rather than antagonize the nation of their birth. It's comparatively new; a sort of trial, in fact. But it's working out too well for my own pleasure."

Butch was incredulous. "You mean, we're grounded for the duration of the war?" he asked. "No more—no more—fighting?"

Major Smith nodded. "Just that. Now, gentlemen, suppose we retire to the mess shack and celebrate your—er—elevation to the Thirteenth."

Still somewhat dazed, and with a growing conviction that they were being told the truth by Major Smith, the two Yanks marched silently to the officer's mess. There, the sight of the best food they had seen since their last Paris leave made them forget their troubles long enough to make a clean sweep of their plates. Onion soup, roast chicken, mashed potatoes, string beans, ice cream, cake, coffee and brandy occupied them for the better part of one hour.

"Do you eat like this *every* day?" Butch asked, as he downed his fourth huge slice of cake and washed it down with a brandy. The major smiled. "Very close to it," he admitted. "You see, none of my men are here because of cowardice. All their sins have been the result of too much—er—imagination, let us call it. So, with nothing else to do, they manage to think up ways and means of separating the commissary and the neighboring peasants from a very representative supply of food, drink and whatever else they see. You will find that my lads here at Thirteen are a pretty sharp lot."

Ivory asked, "How come they got here, then? What did they do?"

"Oh," Major Smith said, "various

things. Captain Barrichieri, here, a noted Italian pilot, furnished a visiting general's plane with a set of iron wheels taken from a railroad hand-car and painted for the purpose. That was at a review in Rome. Naturally, the general burned his motor out trying to get off the ground."

Ivory grinned and Butch roared. The Italian captain smiled modestly.

"Lieutenant Ockendowski, on your right, is the Polish gentleman who disguised his plane as an enemy ship, loaded the machine gun with blank cartridges, and made a mock attack on his French airdrome. Captain Petropopoloff assisted him. Lieutenant Melletier is the French pilot who was ordered to take a Cabinet member for a thrill ride. He gave it to him! He took along a broken control stick and managed to convince the politico that they were falling, out of control, with the joy stick broken. And so on and so on. A playful little crowd."

Ivory eyes sharpened. "And what did you do, Major?"

Woffington Smith yawned and stretched. "Oh, nothing much," he said. "A blighter came to our field to put on a show. A very offensive chap, he was. While he was telling my comrades how good he was, I crossed up his controls so that later, when he tried to go to the right, he went to the left, and so on. Not a bad little stunt, what? But I didn't know the blighter's uncle was in Parliament."

In ten minutes, Ivory and Butch had the squadron's personal history down pat. Ivory sat thoughtful for a few minutes.

"All these men come in here with planes, Major?" he asked.

"**R**IGHT," Major Smith told him. "The Italians brought a huge, old, Caproni bi-plane. Wings measure more than a hundred feet. But it's in deuced bad shape. Our Russian and Polish friends came in an antiquated two-seater of some outlandish name. Older than Adam. Then,

we have broken down Camels—crippled Spads—an Avro or two—what is left of a veteran S. E. Five—a Handley-Page bomber, with several struts missing—a Moraine 'Parasol' of 1914 vintage, and some other assorted wrecks. They are all in the hangars, but not one is in flying shape now."

Izard blinked, and stared at Butch McFee. "But why not put 'em in shape?" he asked.

"No mechanics," Woffington Smith explained.

"Huh," Ivory grunted. "Say, me and Butch have forgot more than most good mechanics will ever know! We'll show these boys how to fix 'em!"

"No materials," Smith said. "No linen to patch holes; no dope for the wings; no wire; no motor parts. So you see, it's no go."

Later, as the crowd was breaking up, he said: "You just had better forget it, don't you know. So far as we are concerned, the war is over!"

Butch and Ivory walked back to the hangar line.

Butch grunted. "Well, let's put the plane in one of these hangars and figure out what to do."

"Nothin' doin'," Ivory told him. "I been thinkin' it over, Butch. Me—I'm for checking out of here."

"Checking out?" Butch echoed. "How do you mean?"

"Well," Ivory said, "we got no orders *not* to fly, have we? I'm goin' to gas this buggy up, do a little repair work on the motor, an' head for Paris. Want to go along?"

"But," Butch protested, "ain't that desertion, Ivory?"

"Who cares?" Izard said. "Me, I'm goin' to fly to Paris an' walk in on American Headquarters an' see if these guys can get away with this."

Butch sighed. "I can see it comin'," he

said. "We'll have handcuffs on Pershing yet! But I'm game if you are!"

Together, they tightened a few flying wires, then Ivory tackled the aged Rolls motor and took it half-way down. Major Smith and some of the other pilots watched them, respectfully but puzzled.

"You old-time pilots certainly know what it is all about," their new commander said. "But, why all the activity?"

Ivory said easily, "Oh, we're just goin' to go up an' take a few pictures o' this place for our scrap-books. We got a camera here, an' some plates."

They gassed and oiled the job before dusk. Ivory gave the plane a short trial spin and found it slightly improved. They seemed to be prepared to stay it out with the others, that night at mess.

But just before the sun came up the next morning, the Yanks' D. H. roared off the tarmac into the murky night air.

In the front pit, Ivory Izard sniffed the quality of the air and decided that it was rain, for sure. He climbed the D. H. as steeply as he dared. Sitting back to take it easy, he felt the uncomfortable bump that a monkey wrench made in the pocket of his flying suit.

Like all good mechanics, he felt that "finders-keepers" was the first law of ownership, so far as tools were concerned. So he had pocketed the wrench which he found hanging by a loop of cord on the hangar wall.

But it wasn't so easy to sit on. He looked for a convenient place to set the wrench, and his eye fell on the knob-like compass housing in front of him. He hooked the cord over the compass and looked back at Butch.

"We're in for bad weather," he shouted. "It'll probably rain all the way in!"

But he didn't see the sudden gyration of the compass as the magnetic needle reacted to the influence of the metal wrench.

Ivory continued to climb until he had five thousand feet on his altimeter. Then,

he swung the nose of the ship until the compass needle pointed at West. If they had been listening intently, they might have heard a distant rumble far below them some thirty minutes after their start.

But Ivory, still climbing, was too intent on the various sounds which came from the motor. At the end of a hour's flying, he had catalogued at least a dozen faults to be corrected as soon as possible.

"Must be near it now," he shouted back to Butch. "It's plenty gray up here, and probably raining on the ground."

They had been flying blind the full time, not exactly a new experience for either of the old-time barnstormers. Now, Izard cut the gun and eased toward the ground in a long, gradual glide.

At two thousand, they broke from out of the mist into a drizzle of rain. Ivory stared down, but not at any view of Paris or its environs. Instead, all below was a peaceful countryside, with here and there the charred remains of a house or building.

Ivory was puzzled. He looked around at Butch. "This seems to be open country," he shouted. "There's no sign of any war here! But where do you figure Paris is?"

Butch shrugged his hands at him. "What do you call those wrecks of houses down there?" he called out. "Have the boys been throwin' a clambake?"

Izard stared. "Maybe an old bombing raid," he suggested. "I been flying West all this time," he said. "Maybe we overshot Paris. I'd better drill along East for a while."

As he cocked the plane over to bank it around, the wrench slipped loose from the compass housing and fell to the floor of the pit. But Ivory was not watching the wrench.

Instead, he was watching the needle of the compass as it whipped from the westward marking and pointed eastward. Yet, the D. H.'s nose was still on its course. As he puzzled, Ivory leaned forward and

got the wrench. He placed it back and gasped when he saw the needle jump back to its old reading.

"Holy Mackerel," he gasped. "I been flyin' on the wrong course, by throwin' the compass out o' whack with that damn wrench! Boy, oh boy! Where do you suppose we are now?"

"What are you sayin'?" Butch snorted.

"Nothing!" Ivory told him glibly. "Just—figurin'."

HE knew that he must be well behind the enemy lines, and once again he removed the wrench and jammed it back in his pocket. With his nose on the West reading, he opened the throttle full and started to climb back in the direction from which he had come.

And then it happened!

One of the clanking noises in the motor had been growing imperceptibly louder. Now, for the first time, Ivory heard its overtone with alarm. But before he could decide whether it was the increased tempo of the motor, there was a jarring thump from the regions of the prop.

"We're blowing a bearing!" Ivory shouted. "Butch, we're going down!"

McFee stared back at him calmly. "Well, this isn't your first forced landing. Don't get so excited. We're near Paris, anyway."

Despite the graveness of their situation, Ivory laughed. It struck him as funny that Butch was so unconcerned. At least thirty miles back of the enemy lines, and Butch sublimely unaware that any thing more than a couple of French gals and a drink or two lurked below the crippled De Haviland.

Ivory nursed the thumping motor along and tried to climb back up for altitude, but all he could achieve was the screen of clouds for perhaps ten minutes. Then, as the motor noise increased, Ivory detected the smell of hot metal and burn-

ing oil, and the thumping grew louder and louder.

Still, Butch merely stared with bored contemplation at Ivory. Then, with a shudder that racked the plane its entire length, the motor ground to a stop.

Ivory nosed the plane down and broke through the cloud stratum again. He stared down on the left, looking for a good place to land and wondering what they would do once the plane was safely on the ground—if it got safely to the ground.

"Hey, Ivory!" Butch yelled excitedly. "We must be near some big French tank-concentration camp. Let's land over there! See that big column of tanks?"

Ivory groaned and looked. In a hollow, he could see a procession of a horde of tanks, large and small, wandering around with the apparent aimlessness of a group of ants.

In the distance, he could see the cluster of buildings that were the barracks for the operators of this tank outfit.

"A school, maybe," Ivory guessed. "A big Hun school for tank instruction!"

He started to bend to the right and away from the tanks, but he saw some men run to a hillock and point toward him. He knew they would have seen his plane's markings. The only thing, now, was to get down as fast as he could and sprint for cover someplace.

But as he nosed down, he saw a long, gray Mercedes car shoot from the hill near the tanks and race along the ground toward where he was going to land.

Ivory twisted back to the left, and came lower and lower. Maybe, he thought, he could get over to the *other* side of that hill.

"Hey, what's the excitement?" Butch called up. "Here comes a car out to meet us, and then you turn away again!"

Ivory didn't answer. He pulled the D. H. to as flat a glide as he could and held it steadily for the top of the hill. He could

see men rushing out from the woods near the hill rim, surrounding the tanks, and point up at the plane.

But the tanks still milled on, turning and twisting and reversing and continuing their gyrations. Ivory's mind was a whirl of thoughts.

"Brace yourself, Butch!" he called. "I don't know where we're goin', or what the next move is when we get there. *But*—those tanks, Old Timer, are *Boche* tanks, and that car comin' out to greet us is a Mercedes. See that pointed hood on her.

"In other words, Old Pal, this here is Germany!"

Ivory guided the ship down, taking care to keep well away from the men who were running out to meet them. He could see the revolvers in the hands of some of them, and the rifles which others carried.

"Germany!" Butch roared. "How in hell did you get over here, and what for?"

"I walked, you sap," Ivory told him, as he bent the ship back again on its course. "Here, take this wrench. We may need it to open a can of soup, or something, when we get down!"

Butch dazedly accepted the tool. "But—but—"

"See those woods?" Ivory said calmly. "Well, I'm goin' to land right alongside them. I'll set the ship afire as we go in, so be ready to hop it. Just get into the woods and we'll see what breaks!"

Two sharp reports from the ground warned Ivory that they were within range of their pursuers. He cocked the D. H. and slipped the remaining four hundred feet, putting the woods between himself and the Huns. He ruddered into it fast, and fishtailed wickedly to kill his flying speed. The ship touched, bounced, then touched again.

BEFORE it had rolled to a stop, Ivory was holding a match to the linen of the fuselage. When the inflammable dope with which the wing and the fuselage were

covered, burst into flame, he leaped to the ground and saw Butch standing by the woods.

"Stand here a minute," Ivory said, as he joined Butch. "Wait until we hear them coming, and then we'll double back into the woods. It'll take 'em a couple of minutes—maybe more, to figure that we're not in the flaming D. H.!"

In a minute, they heard the shouts and the crashing footsteps from the far end of the woods.

"Come on," Ivory said, and sped as fast as he could through the trees and back in the direction opposite to that taken by the pursuers. After five minutes, Ivory could see a patch of clearing ahead.

"What's that?" Butch yelled, pulling him to a stop. "A motor!"

They listened. The sound came from ahead of them. A bulky, gray shape trundled into view and made an awkward turn.

"The tanks," Ivory said. Cautiously, he made his way forward. From the concealment of a tree, he peered out at the machine of war.

"The main body of tanks is over to the right," he said. "This guy seems to be practicin' a few waltz steps over in a corner by himself. Just stay low for a minute!"

The tank gyrated around and retraced its tread-chains and made another turn. From the distance behind them, they could hear a shout. More shouts followed, and this time nearer.

"Darn it, they're wise," Butch said. "If that tank would only get the hell out o' here, we could sprint for it. Those guys are comin' in after us!"

Ivory listened, then nodded. "Can you shinny a tree?" he asked Butch.

McFee stared morosely at the trees that towered above them, then shook his head. "Naw," he said, dejectedly. "But you go ahead, an' I'll stay here an' tell 'em I was alone. You could come down after dark, and maybe escape back to our lines."

"Yeah?" Ivory said. "And leave you to live on the fat of the land here? Nothin' doin'! Gee, if only they left empty tanks lyin' around like they do planes on hangar lines! If only we could get into one of those iron elephants, an'—hey!"

Butch stared. "What is it?"

"Gimme that wrench," Ivory panted. "Come on, Butch! We're goin' to ask these guys in the tank for a bit of shelter until the storm blows over!"

Butch gaped, but Ivory snatched the wrench from his hand and dashed out into the clearing. Butch hesitated only a moment. Then, with the sounds of the pursuers louder in his ears, he rushed out into the small clearing after Ivory.

The diminutive Izard had reached the side of the lumbering tank. He looked it over quickly, then rapped hard on the outer shell. He threw himself up, got a foothold on the side, and scrambled to the top. As Butch started after him, the tank came to a halt and a hatch swung open at the top.

The inspired Ivory swung the wrench at the head that appeared in the aperture, and he slid in head-first after the disappearing German. Butch swarmed up after him and fell headlong inside. He pulled the hatch down.

In the dark, small space, he saw the German who had peeped out lying prone on the floor, dead to the world. At the levers which Butch guessed were the controls, another Hun sat, his eyes staring in fright at the two strange visitors who confronted him.

Ivory prodded the man with the handle of the wrench and said: "Giddap, boy, and let nothing detain you!" He pointed forward with an impatient hand. "I guess you can't talk English, old timer, but that's *your* hard luck! You get along, or you'll never see your father in the Fatherland. Git!"

He made the clucking noises with his mouth that are known to every farm hand

in the world, and are just the same in every tongue.

The Hun babbled, "Yah, yah!" and slipped a lever. The tank trundled forward.

And just then the yelling, running crowd of men burst from the woods and charged toward the tank.

Butch saw this from a peep-hole in the side of the tank. He called to Ivory:

"It's all up, Ivory. Here they come!"

Ivory stooped over the unconscious German and felt around. He came up with a Luger in his hand. He prodded the driver in the ribs with it and motioned silence. Then he saw that the man was peering into something that hung down in front of him.

"A periscope, eh?" Ivory said, and stooped to look. "Well, just keep going and see that you don't slip."

THE German sensed the menace in his voice, and trembled. But the speed increased. Then, there came a rapping on the side of the tank. A guttural voice yelled in to them. The driver of the tank looked to Ivory with fear stricken eyes.

Butch whispered, "They're probably asking if he has seen us!"

Ivory nodded. He said to the Hun: "Nein! Do you get that—Nein! Tell 'em 'No', Kraut, an' if you miss—it'll be too bad!"

The Boche trembled, but managed to call out "Nein" in loud, clear tones. There followed a colloquy between the Hun within and those outside. Finally, the searching party went off in another direction.

"Whew!" Butch breathed. "That was close."

Ivory grunted. "Close?" he said. "We're still about forty miles on the bad side of Hunland. What do we do now?"

"Keep goin'," Butch said. "Maybe we can get far enough away to get down someplace and hide out for a while. How about it?"

Ivory peered through the periscope.

"Most of the tanks over there in the main field have stopped," he said. "But some of 'em are still milling around. Let's see if we can get out o' this some way!"

He saw a clearing through the woods to his right, and jabbed the driver with his Luger. He stared as the man slipped one lever forward and pulled another back and turned in the direction indicated by Ivory's thumb.

The tank lumbered around to the right. At a break in the woods, Ivory signalled "Left," and started west with the woods between him and the tank practice grounds. But his eyes were more and more interested in what the Boche was doing with the controls.

Suddenly Ivory prodded the man. "Move," he said, and signalled. To Butch, he said: "Hold the gun on this guy. I'm goin' to do my first solo on a tank! It looks pretty easy."

Butch looked worried for a moment, but started to grin when the tank, under Ivory's guidance, continued on. Down into valleys they nosed, and up hills again. Once, Ivory got ambitious and crossed a creek in full flight.

And, as the minutes passed to an hour, on and on they bored, keeping clear of roads where they might be detected and questioned. Butch had an idea, and put it into execution. Then he called:

"Hey, Ivory!"

Izard swung and stared blankly for a moment at a German soldier. Then he grinned. "McFee the Hun! That uniform fits okay, Butch. Hey, watch how I do this, then I'll let you solo while I get into a nice gray suit. I always did look good in gray!"

But all good things come to an end. Just as Ivory was buttoning the jacket on, they heard a horn sound in the distance. It sounded again.

Butch, at the controls, peered through the periscope, and said:

"Sweet Cow! We're runnin' parallel to

a road, an' there's that lousy Mercedes we saw back at the tank place! They missed this tank, an' now here they come!"

Ivory peered out a gun-hole in the side.

"Yep," he admitted. "The fun's over. But how are they goin' to get in here? They can't stop us with pop guns."

Butch said, "It's only a question of time. We're cooked!"

Shouts came from the Mercedes, which was halted a scant fifty feet from them; shouts of command, judging by the voices. Ivory stared.

"There's three of 'em," he said. "Listen, Butch—we're goin' to gamble. We got away with it once, let's try it again! Swing over and stop as near that car as you can get!"

Butch grinned and said, "Let's push our luck. Come on!" And in another moment they were ranging alongside the Mercedes.

"He must be a general at least," Ivory said. "Boy, ain't that some hat? Look at those coats! One brass hat, one shave-tail, an' a driver. Now, just come out easy like, boy; they don't know we're in here, an' they won't know it till we come out; and it'll be too late, then. But first, I'll tie up our little friends, here."

The tank ranged alongside the car and clanked to a halt. Ivory tested their prisoners' bonds, then pulled his tin hat low over his eyes.

"Let's go!" he whispered, and swung the hatch open.

Two German-clad men slid down the side of the tank and walked soberly toward the Mercedes. The officers in the tonneau of the car stared in astonishment, and the driver gaped.

Ivory and Butch goose stepped smartly up near the man with the black-and-gold helmet, with the white horse-tail hanging gaily from it. Ivory halted, and Butch goose-stepped around the back of the car.

"Okay!" Ivory called, and flashed his Luger. Butch, on the other side, calmly slugged the astounded driver on the head

and dragged him to the tank, while Ivory kept the two officers covered.

"He's tied," Butch announced, when he appeared from the inside of the tank again. "Now I'll tap Little Willie here, an' then we'll get Big Boy for the third and final out!"

"Get Little Willie's hat an' coat first," Ivory said. "They're too good to lose. An' about Big Boy—why not take him along to get us through? He looks so tough no one would question him!"

"**L**ITTLE Willie" was stripped of his hat and coat, tied, and helped into the tank. Then, Butch climbed in and drove the iron steed down into the fields again, away from the roadside. He climbed out, shut the hatch down, and hustled back to the Mercedes.

"Butch," Ivory said, "you sit in back with Big Boy an' catch the salutes. Me, I always honed to drive one of these here high-class jobs. An' if Big Boy acts disorderly, tap him one an' climb under that jazzbo hat of his."

He slid behind the wheel of the big, rakish car and said: "Hold your hats and pants, boys—Li'l Ivory is gwine home!"

The gray streak that tore westward along the roads toward the Front slowed up in traffic now and then on the way. Some may have wondered at the picture of a smiling *Leutnant* who sat so chummily next to the red-faced, glaring general. But one look at that Hun brass hat's features and even the toughest of Boche military cops were glad to give him right-of-way with a snappy salute.

Traffic thinned again as the Mercedes roared on nearer and nearer the Front. Izard pulled to a stop once, peeled off his greatcoat and quickly divested himself of his white undershirt.

"In about five minutes," he told Butch, "we're goin' to be up there where the artillery is droppin' eggs on cross-roads. If we get by *that*, it might be that a little

wavin' o' this shirt would pass for some sort of truce flag. An' when I tell you, you better start wavin'!"

Ivory opened the speedy job as wide as he dared. He slewed past shell holes in the center of the road with inches to spare as he dug on toward the Lines.

Then, a patch of open space showed from a hilltop.

The outposts that flanked the road on the Allies' side of the lines fired wildly at the ghost car that tore past them. A rattle of machine gun fire brought a mad waving of a white shirt and brakes brought a screaming protest from tortured rubber.

A detachment of British Tommies advanced cautiously with bayonets set. Ivory, pushing back his iron hat, yelled:

"Take it easy with them pig-stickers, boys, I'm ticklish!"

Major Woffington Smith sighed regretfully as he admitted the apparent desertion of his two Yank recruits to Squadron Thirteen.

"I can't much blame them," he said, to Captain Barrichieri. "I have felt like it, myself, sometimes. But I didn't think those two—What's that?"

Outside the small building, there arose a gradually increasing noise. The roar of motorcycles sounded, then the heavier drone of automobile motors. The din increased to fearful proportions as a cavalcade of military police on motorcycles led three automobiles into the field road.

Barrichieri was at the window. "Ze po-lease," he said. "An', also, a bigga car. Ha! A Mercedes! An' two Staff-a cars!"

Major Woffington Smith was at the window. "German officers!" he exclaimed. "I say, what do you—my word! *Two* of the Germans are Izard and McFee!"

A small army of men tramped up and into the building. Ivory Izard and Butch McFee grinned out from underneath coal-scuttle helmets.

"Major," Ivory grinned, "I figured we needed only one more recruit to make this a real honest-to-goodness Foreign Legion of the Air, so I brung this here German brass hat in with me!"

Butch cut in: "But your Limey boys say he can't join us, he's gotta go back to Paris to meet up with some of our own bunch. Ain't that tough?"

"But don't let it worry you none, Major," Izard said. "This morning, we crashed near this guy and his nice big tank-school. I've convinced British Air Headquarters that we should fix up these here ships of ours an' we'll pay 'em a formal call. They were all for handlin' the job themselves, but we wouldn't give 'em any dope unless they let the Thirteenth do the bombing. Avros, Capronis, Spads, Camels, an' all. An' because we swapped the Huns our old D. H., a bit the worse for fire, in exchange for this nice Mercedes, we're gettin' a new D. H. Ain't that nice?"

"But," Major Smith babbled, half hysterical, "but, man, I haven't any ships that will fly!"

Ivory helped himself to a cigarette.

"We can have our pick o' what planes you want to fly, *after* this show is over," he said. "But we thought it would be more fun, Butch an' me, if we talked 'em into repairin' all this assorted junk of ours here, an' showin' the boys what a *real* squadron looks like!"

"Yeah," Butch cut in. "So they got mechanics on the way over, an' struts an' wires an' linen an' dope an' motor parts, an'—"

"An' bombs," Ivory spelled him, "an' a triple-shift crew to have us all shipshape for a dawn attack. An' when these mugs that fly only one type o' ship in a squadron see the Thirteenth Squadron crash in review—"

"Hey, you!" Butch protested. "You mean, 'Pass in review!'"

The EYE OF DOOM

by C. M. MILLER

Out of the past, like a chapter from the life he had left behind him, Chinese Brady saw Buck Stirling come through the door. "I'll get you, Brady," the man had said, and there were marks across his flesh to keep his memory sharp. But threats were just a dime a dozen to Chinese Brady who played the game of War—played it for all the thing was worth—each day a separate adventure!

Schleicher came plunging down like a falcon.



CHINESE BRADY was seated at his desk, quietly studying the reports that had been turned in that evening, when squat and ugly Buck Stirling came into the office, reporting as a new replacement.

Brady looked up curiously, his black eyes level and steady, while Stirling had stopped in his tracks, as though an invis-



ible wall had suddenly dropped in front of him, barring his way.

Red anger crept out of his high collar and flooded his sunbronzed face. As quickly, however, his gray eyes became as cold and hard as ice.

"By God," he rasped in his thick throat, "if I'd known that you were on this side of the war I'd have joined the Germans!"

"I don't doubt that, Buck Stirling," Brady said evenly. "In a way, it would be like you."

For a silent moment gray eyes met coal black ones in a clash of burning hate. Brady looked like a slim, black haired, bronze statue as he sat stiffly erect behind his flat-topped desk.

Stirling was the perfect idea of a squat strong-man with a burning, searing hate tearing at his brain.

"I haven't forgotten what happened to me that time in Guatemala," Stirling rasped. "You commanded those Federal troops that captured and horsewhipped me. I haven't forgotten and by damn, I never will! You'll pay for that some day too!"

"Stirling," Brady said coolly, "I was hired to do a job and I did it. But if you hadn't tried to start that revolution so you could grab off a half dozen rich oil wells it would never have happened, and you know it."

Stirling tramped to the desk and leaned over it, his broad face contorted with fury. "Listen guy," he rasped, "a man don't often forget bein' horsewhipped, does he? And if the American consul hadn't gotten me out of jail I'd have been shot. I'm not forgettin' that either."

Brady's lips thinned and his black eyes glowed with sudden fire. His whole body seemed to radiate that dominating personality of his.

"But you have forgotten that the whipping was stopped the instant I heard of it, and you have also forgotten that the

men were going to chain you and drag you behind one of the oil company's trucks before I stopped that! And if I hadn't stopped it, no American Consul, or any other human being, would have been able to free you. You would have been killed!"

For a moment Stirling's thick body seemed to quiver with rage. Then, with a quick movement he drew off his cap, uncovering his shaven, bullet-like head. As swiftly, he ripped the tunic and shirt from his body, revealing broad, muscle-rippling shoulders and a hairy chest. Across his bared body appeared long, heavy white welts.

"See those scars!" he growled in cold fury. "I got them from that whipping and I'll carry them to my grave! What's more Brady—you're going to pay for every damn one of them!"

"Put your clothes on!" Brady snapped. "Get them on and get out of here! I've heard enough! It was your own fault you got those scars and you're not going to blame it on me! And, Stirling, remember—that since you have been assigned to this field you will unquestioningly obey my orders! You may be one of the best machine gunners ever born, but you are just a green replacement here until you can prove yourself to be a man!"

"I didn't come here to prove anything," Stirling rasped. "But since I saw you I've decided that I'm here to get you."

"Get me if you can," Brady said evenly, "but you're going to do your share of the work. Get out!"

There was something cold and sharply commanding in Brady's voice. Reluctantly Buck Stirling drew on his clothes and stalked toward the door.

But as Stirling swung the door open the drone of a racing, low-flying Fokker filled the room. Brady went into swift action. He was on his feet and out the door before Buck Stirling could suck in a quick breath.

There was still light enough to see that Fokker coming hell-bent over a low rim of bare hills to the north. For a moment Brady studied it with keen eyes, before he snapped to the men that were pouring out of the bunkhouse and racing for the gun pits.

"Stand by, but don't fire 'till I give the order. There's something queer about that ship."

Stirling was out on the field now, his cap in hand, his shaven head gleaming in the fading light.

The Fokker came on like a winged bullet. Then, as it was dipping its nose to swoop over the field, Brady definitely made out the white flags that fluttered from its center section struts.

"I thought so," he snapped, then spinning, he shouted to the gun pits. "No shooting! It's a ship with a message."

THE Fokker streaked across the field like a meteor, roared up over the hangars and went tearing back toward the south. But already Brady was running across the field to catch the parachuted message-cylinder which the Fokker had dropped. The cylinder had scarcely hit the ground before he had scooped it up and was ripping it open.

Men vomited out of the gun-pits and came running across the field, Stirling among them.

Brady glanced swiftly at the message while his lips thinned in startled surprise. Suddenly his eyes found Buck Stirling's wide face. Brady spoke evenly:

"Just a minute, Stirling, I want to read you this note—the rest of you men may go back to your quarters."

When the crew were out of earshot, Brady read:

To Chinese Brady: Felicitations and good health!

I am extremely sorry to say that I have been transferred to the Front opposite you.

I have tried to keep this from happening, but then I am only a captain.

Remember the days in Guatemala? When this war ends, and if we both live, we must have a reunion for old times' sake.

Herman Schleicher.

"Huh," Stirling grunted, "now I do wish I had joined the Germans. Schleicher is a good sport and a fair, clean fighter."

"I'll agree with you on that last point," Brady said carefully, "but it might interest you to know that he also has a hot temper, and he owned the oil wells that you were trying to steal."

Stirling's jaw dropped in utter surprise, "What?" he shouted. "Schleicher owned them! I didn't know that."

"Not many people did know it, but if he finds out that you were the man that started that revolution, he'll kill you in a minute. He may anyway, and he may kill me too, for he has built up a startling record in this war. He'll get you easy because you're green. I'd have some chance against him, though God forbid that I ever have to fight him. I don't want to."

Stirling rubbed a shaky hand over his shaven, sweaty head. "You forget," he managed, "that I'm one of the best damn machine gunners out."

"But you're not the best pilot." Brady kidded him, "Now, put on your cap before you catch cold. You can't afford to get sick. You're going to need a clear head from now on."

General McLain's car came bounding down the road and screamed to a stop in front of the office. Brady hurried across the field, just as the peppery, clipped-mustached little general leaped out of the car, jammed his cap crookedly on his head and barked:

"Damn it all, Brady, you've got to get busy on this right away. Why, the blasted Germans have blown up a hundred men in the last three hours and I had every

condemned one of them hidden in the woods behind a high hill! Blast it all, you've got to do something!"

"Well, General," Brady said quietly, "blowing up men is a part of war—the nasty part of it."

McLain glared at Brady with sour eyes and snorted disgustedly. "Don't you think I've soldiered long enough to know that!" he snapped. "But that isn't all! They've blown up artillery placements that we put in at night and hid so damned carefully I couldn't find 'em myself! I move a bunch of troops into an area during the night, camouflage them thoroughly and"—he made an upward motion with both hands—"blooey! Up they go first thing in the morning! Now, what are you going to do about it?"

And it was typical that McLain should run to Brady with his troubles. They all did. This slim, soldierly looking man had fought in every war from the Boxer Rebellion in 1902 down to date. He lived war, ate it and breathed it; and his quiet confidence in the face of threatening disaster, showed that he knew war, too.

"How about airplane observation, or photography?" Brady asked.

"Nonsense!" McLain snorted. "Don't you think I've got sense enough to have all that checked? There's nothing to it! It's impossible! We've watched for it, but dammit, that's not what happens. Besides, I've got a dozen G-2 men in Germany right now trying to find out how it is done and they haven't reported a thing."

"How about spies signaling to their artillery?" Brady asked.

"Say you black haired whippersnapper," McLain barked, "don't you think I've checked that too! No, it's something mysterious; something—something different. I—I wish you'd look into it."

"Look into it where?" Brady asked quietly. "You haven't said where all this happens."

"Why damn it, if I knew that all I'd have to do is keep my men away from the place! It happens everywhere I don't want it to, that's all!"

Brady smiled tightly. "Alright, I'll start looking into it at the crack of dawn."

McLain grabbed Brady's hand and pumped it with grateful relief. "I knew you would, Brady," he sputtered. "But for heaven's sake be careful. I can't afford to lose you, Brady. I'd be lost without you."

He blew his nose with a suspiciously loud snort, hopped back into the car and shouted, "Get on there, driver, what the hell are you waiting for?"

NEXT MORNING Brady roused Buck Stirling out long before dawn. "I'm going out, Stirling, and I'm taking you along to give you a slant at the front lines. And I'm warning you now that if you try to pull any monkey shines you'll pay dearly for them. Understand? You are here to obey orders and to forget things that have happened in the past—things that were your own fault."

Stirling polished the top of his bare skull with the flat of his hand and rasped coldly, "I'm not forgettin' those scars on my back."

"You'd better," Brady warned evenly. "Come on, let's go."

Brady watched Stirling narrowly all the time they were going out and even after he had taken his position high above the trenches and just under the rolling belly of a huge, cottony cloud. He was going to make certain that Stirling had no chance to turn those deadly Vickers on him. This man, Stirling could write his name with a machine gun!

Brady had circled for an hour, carefully studying the ground and the mountain rim to the north, watching the sky and keeping a sharp eye on Stirling when suddenly it happened.

An area, well back of the Yank trenches that he knew had just been occupied and carefully camouflaged that night, erupted into a weltering geyser of flame and death.

Brady shot a cautious look at Stirling, making sure that the man was in a safe position just off his right wing tips. Then snatching his glasses from their clip against the pit-side, he studied that snarling blossom of death with characteristic carefulness.

Men were dying, horribly, down there, being ripped to shreds, blown up! Guns were being torn apart, trees uprooted and the ground was erupting in great chunks beneath the terrific hail of the mysteriously searching shell fire from the German artillery.

But how did they know the men were there? Brady pondered that question as he studied that flaming hell far below.

Then he acted, swiftly. Kicking his ship around, he went tearing into Germany to solve the mystery. Stirling was forgotten now. There was work to do—work that involved the lives of thousands of men. And this was no time for personal differences. But Stirling had looped around too, and was holding his place at Brady's right beam.

They were scarcely five miles over the trenches when a roaring Fokker came plunging out of a cloud bank to drop on Brady's tail.

But Chinese Brady was no novice at air fighting, and he spotted the Fokker the instant it left the cottony mists. Stirling saw it and zoomed away, streaking hell bent for the cloud.

For a split instant Brady thought that Stirling was running out, then he knew better. Stirling wasn't the kind to run, he was getting away—hoping that the Fokker would kill Brady!

Brady's black eyes tightened into hard, icy balls. He clenched his fists and swore

that Stirling would pay for this desertion.

Once his taut eyes flicked across his guns, then back to that plunging Fokker. It was almost in a position to shoot now. Brady's hands tightened on the stick. He seemed as coldly nonchalant as he would be writing a letter, but—

Spandaus spat!

Brady looped. His Spad zoomed and corkscrewed around in a slithering bank to get on the Fokker's tail. Then Chinese Brady gasped.

Herman Schleicher flew that Fokker! There on the side of its fuselage was the same insignia Schleicher had always used on his stationery—a hunting falcon with a hawk in its talons!

Brady groaned miserably. "God, why did this have to happen?"

Schleicher had seen the white "thirteen" painted on Brady's slate gray ship and had recognized it. For a seeming eternity the two ships circled each other, as though each man was hoping against hope that something would end this horrible situation.

Brady's black eyes were filled with misery, while Schleicher was stiff and erect in his pit. Now and then Brady could see him shake his head, sadly.

Stirling was hovering high above like a hungry vulture, patiently awaiting the death of the man he hated. Brady's eyes darted to Stirling, then back to Schleicher. Grimly he muttered, through misery-stiffened lips:

"War is war, Schleicher. May the best man win."

Firing a burst to warn Schleicher that he was coming, Chinese Brady heeled across that circle with the speed of a bullet. Schleicher had looped expertly, smoothly. A twinge of admiration swept through Brady as he noted the German's flying. It was perfect! Beautiful!

Here were two rapier-keen minds pitted against each other, while Stirling kept

high above, chuckling and waiting for Brady to die!

Schleicher sliced out of his loop, then came plunging down like a falcon. His guns cracked and tracer sliced the sky in smokey lanes.

Brady's Spad caught the terrific hail just back of the pit, and for the tenth part of a second he was in a phosphorous-smelling hell. His Spad was quivering and shaking beneath the battering. A longeron split and poked through the fabric like a broken bone. Then suddenly he was out and maneuvering warily after Schleicher.

As the German roared past, Brady went into a scooping dive to come up under him. Schleicher saw the danger and banked desperately.

Brady squeezed forward against the safety. His face was grim, and white with sorrow. The crosswires caught Schleicher's fuselage. Brady clamped down on the trips and banked, following the German.

His Vickers leaped into blazing, furious action. Smokey slugs spurted through the prop and hit the Fokker like the crack of doom. But in another second Brady's guns had jammed and went hopelessly dead!

Meanwhile two more Fokkers had slid out of the cloud about a half mile from Stirling and came streaking down the sky. Instantly, Schleicher saw the situation and headed up to turn the Fokkers back.

Brady noticed the maneuver and nodded. "That's like you, Schleicher," he said admiringly. "You *are* a fair sport!"

BUT the two Fokkers were out for blood—Chinese Brady's blood! They ignored Schleicher's signals to turn back and came tearing on down sky.

Brady heeled sharply to get away, but one of the Fokkers lunged down tight on his tail. Schleicher shot in furiously, try-

ing to head it off. The Fokker zoomed away from his angry charge, while Brady went into an *Immelman* to get away from a collision. Then the second Fokker, knowing that he was helpless, darted recklessly in and caught him a raking burst.

For a second the Spandaus slugs were beating at his Hisso like a million tiny hammers—pounding, ripping, slashing. Then, with a hollow cough, the motor quit cold!

Brady's face tightened into a graven mask. They had him now! His glittering eyes looked up for Stirling.

Stirling was coming down, coming like a bat out of hell!

"I suppose he wants to finish me off," Brady said grimly. "Alright, so be it—if he can."

But Schleicher too saw Stirling just then, and writhing his ship around in a masterly maneuver he ripped a furious burst into the Spad. Stirling's ship rolled over on its back, seemed to hang there for a moment on invisible hooks, then went winding down toward the ground.

Brady was holding his ship in a flat glide. Schleicher came over and cruised protectingly around him until he hit the ground ten feet from a hidden artillery placement. A gray swarm of Jerries who had been watching the fight, now made a tight circle around Brady, even before his Spad had stopped rolling. A young captain, Luger in hand, hurried from under the camouflage net.

Schleicher swooped low over them just then and dropped a note tied to a wing bolt.

Brady sat perfectly still in his pit watching the Germans with cool eyes. Resistance would just be suicide. There were twenty Lugers aimed at him right now.

The young captain read the note which Schleicher had dropped, then strode to the Yank plane.

"So you are Chinese Brady," he said

curiously. "I've heard of you often. Captain Schleicher says that we are to bring you to his field immediately and to pick up the other American that crashed and bring him too."

Brady climbed out of his pit and bowed formally.

"I will be glad to visit with Captain Schleicher," he said, "and I am relieved to hear that the other American was not killed."

The young German, not to be outdone in military courtesy, bowed stiffly. "If Captain Brady will hand me his gun and give his promise not to attempt escape I shall be glad."

Brady smiled tightly. "I'll give you my gun, Captain, but I will not give you my parole. I'm warning you, I'll escape at the first chance."

"Then you'll not get a chance," the German said firmly.

Brady chuckled dryly. "We'll see," he said quietly.

THEY put Brady in a car with a watchful escort, picked up Stirling a half mile away, then started for Herman Schleicher's field.

Brady glanced at Stirling's sullen face and said caustically, "Thanks for coming to my aid back there. You were a great help in that air fight, or were you just diving down to make sure I was killed?"

Stirling rubbed the flat of his hand over his bare skull. "I wasn't comin' to help you," he growled. "There was a flight of French Nieuports comin' up. I was puttin' on a show for them."

"It was a nice show, but it was wasted," Brady said dryly. "There are no French in this sector." Ignoring Stirling's sheepish look, Brady continued, "But now that we are Schleicher's prisoners, you may be in for a hot time of it, that is, if he has learned of your part in that revolution.

Stirling ran a careful finger over the scar on his lip. "And I suppose you'll tell him about it if he don't know already."

Brady's black eyes probed Stirling's face shrewdly. "I could probably get plenty out of it if I did," he said evenly.

Stirling squirmed uneasily. "Yeah?" he blustered. "Well, don't forget the Jerries will probably give me a medal for killin' you. By damn, I ain't forgot that horsewhippin' and now I got another good reason for doin' it!"

"You had your chance when we were up."

"I thought the Jerries were going to do it for me."

Hauptman Herman Schleicher was in his tiny office when Brady and Stirling were ushered in. Schleicher's head and face were swathed in white bandages that almost covered his short brown hair and sun bronzed cheeks. But when he saw Brady, he leaped around the desk, grabbed his hand and pumped it in hearty welcome.

"It's good to see you again, Brady," he chuckled. "And who is this man?"

Brady's eyes flashed to Stirling's broad face. "His name is Stirling," he said evenly. Then significantly, "He's an old friend of ours from Guatemala."

Stirling shot a look of uneasy hate at Brady, then shook hands with Schleicher. Schleicher sat down, then produced a bottle and cigarettes. Stirling took both, but Brady refused, saying:

"I've always taken the stand that when you command men in war you've got to have a clear head so I never learned to drink, and I don't smoke."

Schleicher chuckled. "You nearly knocked the clearness out of my head a while ago. I got a slug crease in the scalp and one on the cheek. But you needn't worry about commanding any more men in this war. You're through now."

"Don't be too sure about that," Brady said oddly.

Schleicher chuckled and held a match to his pipe, his shrewd blue eyes twinkling at Brady.

"I'll just bet you a hundred dollars that you don't."

Brady smiled tightly. "Still a good sport, aren't you, Schleicher? I'd take that bet, but I haven't more than a dollar with me."

Schleicher waved his hand. "Chinese Brady's word is as good as a bond to me. The bet is on. But a hundred dollars is quite a bit to me too, now," he went on suddenly sober. "I'm broke. I lost my oil wells right after that revolution. The revolution seemed to start my troubles. I'm cleaned!"

His clenched fist banged the desk with sudden heat. "I'd give a thousand dollars to find out who was back of that revolution," he rasped.

Stirling choked on his drink. Sputtering and coughing he watched Brady with murderously red-rimmed eyes. Brady smiled tightly, his black eyes were alive although not a muscle in his face moved. For an hour they visited until Schleicher stood up.

"Sorry gentlemen," he said, "I'll have to lock you up. And since you won't give me your parole, I warn you that if you attempt to escape you will be shot. I hate to give such an order, but this is war. I'm sure you'll understand."

"Perfectly," Brady said evenly.

"You'll have company," Schleicher went on. "We've had a number of G-2 men prowling around here lately nosing into a new artillery fire control method we have. I've got one of them out there now."

"I'll be very glad to meet him," Brady said, truthfully.

But as they locked the Yanks in a tiny

steel and stone building, Brady was thinking that Stirling might be more dangerous than ever, now that he had heard Herman Schleicher make that thousand dollar offer. Or would he?

THE G-2 MAN was a short, gloomy individual, dressed in the baggy clothes of a French peasant. Brady sat beside him on the cot and engaged him in conversation.

"Yeah," he said dully, staring at his boot-toes, "they're going to shoot me in the morning and I didn't find out a thing either. But these Jerries have got something on a mountain—Mont Helaise it's called—about twenty-five miles back of here. I was nosing around there when they got me."

Brady studied Stirling thoughtfully while that war-trained mind of his grappled with this fresh news. He was wondering too, just how far he could trust Stirling. Stirling hated him—hated him like poison—but now and then he had caught the man's cold gray eyes quietly looking at him, with just a hint of uneasiness and some respect too.

Stirling saw Brady studying him and shrugged his wide shoulders, rubbed his hand over his bare head and turned his back to stare out the barred door at the pacing sentry.

Brady said to the G-2 man in a low, warning voice, "Wait until it gets dark. We've got to escape. I must find out what they have on that mountain. As soon as we get out you beat it across the lines."

A surge of hope flooded into the G-2 man's eyes, then it was gone. "You can't get out of here," he husked. "Besides, they'll shoot you if you go nosing around that place."

"We're still in uniform."

"Uniforms won't stop bullets."

"We'll see."

It was dark when Brady suddenly threw

himself on the rough cot, groaning and moaning and threshing about. "Sentry!" he yelled. "Sentry, come here! I'm sick—I'm sick! Give me some water, quick!"

The sentry pushed his face against the iron bars on the door. "What's the matter?" he growled. "Go to sleep. You're waking up the whole field."

"It's an old wound of mine—in the belly," Brady gasped. "It gets to hurting—and something to drink will check it. Give me some water."

The man carefully studied Brady's writhing body for a moment, then getting a bucket of water, came back and unlocked the door. "Get back in a corner you two," he growled, threatening them with a Luger, "and stay there."

Stirling and the G-2 man backed up. The sentry shoved the door wide and bent down to set the bucket on the floor.

Brady's body seemed to leave the bunk as though it were catapulted. The sentry's mouth popped open to scream. Brady's shoulder hit him full in the face, choking off the scream and sending the two of them out through the door in a rolling, tumbling ball of arms and legs.

Stirling and the G-2 man came bounding out after them. But before Brady could snatch the sentry's Luger and bash him over the head a cool voice said:

"Knowing you as I do, Brady, I was afraid something like this would happen. Just sit right where you are and don't move."

Stirling began cursing throatily. The G-2 man grunted in terrible disappointment. The sentry lay perfectly still, knocked cold. Brady spun on his hands and knees, the sentry's Luger hidden under his fingers.

Schleicher was standing there, a Luger in his hand, his bandages looming white in the dark.

"You've got a hellishly keen brain, Brady," he said quietly, "and I was afraid

you'd figure out something so I came out to look around. Besides, I want to win that hundred bucks."

"Thanks for the compliment," Brady said dryly, "but how about these other men? They can think too, you know."

Schleicher half turned his head to look at Stirling. "Not like you, Brady," he started to say. But Brady had seen his chance. He grasped the Luger. His wrist snapped. The gun flew through the air hitting Schleicher on the jaw.

The German went down, out cold even before he hit the ground.

Leaping to his feet Brady snapped, "Stirling, drag Schleicher into that cell, quick!" To the G-2 man he said, "Beat it! It's your chance. Hurry!"

Ten minutes later three men came back out of the cell. One was short, squat and kept his shaven head covered with a coal-skuttle helmet. The second was straight, stiff and military in the uniform of a German captain, and had his head and face closely bandaged. The third was limp, as though drunk, and dangled between the two. He wore a khaki uniform.

They walked carefully across the space to the operations office and stopped beside a car. The bandaged man put the limp one on the floor and climbed into the back seat. The squat man took the wheel and drove off to the north.

They had scarcely covered ten miles when Schleicher came to, fumbled his aching head and started to sit up. Brady pushed him down.

"Stay down," he said evenly, his voice muffled by the bandages on his face. "I don't want to kill you, Schleicher, but don't try to escape and don't forget to obey orders instantly. We're in a bad enough hole now without taking any chances on you."

Schleicher stared up from the bottom

of the car. "Where are you going?" he demanded.

"Mont Helaise," Brady clipped.

"I'll bet you another hundred you don't get away with it, Brady."

"Done! But if I don't, somebody is going to be a dead dog," he finished grimly.

"Alright," Schleicher said resignedly. "But I wish you'd give me my pipe. It's in the pocket of that coat you have on."

"Nope," Brady grunted. "You should never have learned to smoke. Now, roll over on your face, I'm going to tie and gag you."

But Brady was worried. The plan he had in the back of his mind depended a lot on just how far Stirling would go. After all, the man was American, and he had helped, so far. Again, he might just be coolly watching for his chance.

STIRLING stopped the car fifty yards from a sentry's barrier across the wooded road, and very near the top of Mont Helaise. Brady leaned forward and said huskily:

"Stirling, you're a Yank and I'm trusting you now because I have to. Stay here, and keep Schleicher quiet, even if you have to kill him. If you hear shooting, try to get away. If you don't, then wait one hour and beat it anyway, because I won't be back."

Without another word Brady climbed out of the car and stalked stiffly toward the sentry house by the side of the barrier.

An armed Boche, one of a half dozen, met Brady at the barrier. Squaring off he held a gleaming bayonet at Brady's chest and demanded, "Your credentials, *Hauptman*."

Brady very carefully drew out Schleicher's identification papers and handed them to a stiff Lieutenant who had just come up. The Lieutenant glanced at them, then

asked shrewdly; "Why do you have your face covered like that?"

Brady's voice was very icy and his hand not far from his Luger when he said: "I was wounded in the head and cheek this afternoon."

The Lieutenant barked at a sergeant in the sentry house, "Telephone *Hauptman* Herman Schleicher's field and verify the fact that he was wounded in the head and cheek this afternoon."

Brady's grim black eyes never left that Lieutenant's face a split instant while the sergeant was telephoning. Had they found out at the field that he had escaped, and if not, would the field force notice that Schleicher had disappeared, now that the telephone call had come through to remind them?

The sergeant came out, saluted and said, "*Hauptman* Schleicher was wounded today, Excellency."

The Lieutenant saluted Brady stiffly. "That is all *Hauptman*. You may pass. But we must be very careful here as we have already caught four spies trying to get in."

"It pays to be very careful," Brady said dryly, then hurried on past the barrier. But now he was doubly worried. There was Stirling, and a possible follow-up on that phone call. He'd have to hurry faster than ever.

Three hundred yards further and the road ended flat up against the side of a small square building on the mountain side. The quarter-moon was just coming up as Brady walked boldly to the door, shoved it open and stepped inside.

A bullet-headed German Colonel now whirled from a desk, his face furious with a sudden burst of anger at the interruption. "Get out!" he bellowed, "Don't you know that we are busy?"

Two Majors, Lugers in their hands, stepped out of a tiny closet in one corner of the room. At that instant a telephone

on the desk jangled shrilly. The Colonel turned to the instrument. The Majors came forward threateningly.

Brady's body tensed, but he risked everything by taking his taut eyes off those advancing Majors and shooting a swift glance around the room.

An eight inch telescope, fitted with a camera, was pointed toward a shuttered window that fronted on the Yank trenches. On a bench was a large and elaborate stereoscope fitted with two photograph negatives. At one side was a pile of films. Then, Brady guessed, that closet was a dark room for developing the films.

The Colonel whirled away from the phone bellowing, "That man is an escaped spy! Seize him! Schleicher's field just phoned of his escape and Schleicher's disappearance."

Brady's hand dropped for his gun. But too late. The split second he had been studying the room had allowed the two Majors to get too close to him.

A Luger was jabbed in his ribs. Another stared him in the face. Brady shrugged tautly.

"It seems I am caught, gentlemen," he said coolly. "Now I can take this confounded bandage off my face and have a smoke."

But the Germans should have known that when Brady was the most nonchalant he was also the most dangerous. And his very nonchalance helped him. It took the Germans so completely by surprise that they merely watched while he drew Schleicher's pipe, tobacco and matches from his pocket, then proceeded to light up.

The unaccustomed smoke nearly brought the tears to his eyes but he fought them away and kept watching the Germans as narrowly as a cat watches a mouse. Holding the lighted match in his hand, as though about to drop it in a cuspidor, all in one lightning-like move-

ment, he tossed it into that pile of highly inflammable photographic films and threw himself flat to the floor.

The Colonel bellowed his horror. The two Majors snatched for that blazing match with desperate fingers. Brady was rolling across the floor toward the door.

Swoosh!

Red, searing flame filled the room with a hellish burst of heat. Brady leaped to his feet and dashed for the door.

Choking smoke rasped at his throat and filled his lungs. But then he was out the door, racing blindly for the spot where Stirling was supposed to be waiting.

Now from up ahead came the sound of shots! A scream! The grind of a car engine and a splintering crash! Brady ran desperately.

Something was wrong.

Then suddenly the car came whirling around a bend in the road, skidded to a halt on screaming tires and Stirling, his bare head shining in the moonlight like a greased billiard ball, shouted out:

"By damn, what a fight! Jump in! They know you. I crashed the barrier, comin' after you. Jump!"

Already Brady was in the car and Stirling was whipping it around. Tearing down the road, they flashed past the crushed barrier like a screaming meteor, three shots following them down the road.

Brady leaned over the front seat. "Nice work Stirling!" he shouted. "I won't forget that!"

"I don't know what the hell made me do it though," Stirling growled. "Where to?"

"Take the first turn to the right," Brady shouted. "Air field there. If we can't steal a plane we're done for. And drive! The Jerries have probably got every telephone wire in the country hot by now. Drive!"

And Stirling drove like a mad man. The car screeched around turns, bounded

over bumps and missed dozens of crashes by scant inches.

Schleicher was bouncing around on the floor, trying to curse through the gag in his mouth. Brady's lips thinned in a tight smile as he glanced down at the German. Soon after, they were tearing off the road onto the air field.

Brady lunged forward. "Drive into a hangar!" he shouted. "Crash through if the door is shut. We've got to get a ship!"

And Stirling was driving, driving crazily, and now the field was awake. Men were pouring out of the buildings. Officers were bellowing in startled alarm.

STIRLING careened the car into a hangar's open door and screeched to a stop. Brady leaped out and grabbed the prop of a Rumpler. "Get Schleicher in the back seat," he shouted. "Hurry!"

Brady heaved. The motor coughed holowly. Stirling dropped the squirming, protesting Schleicher in the after-pit, and leaping to the door, threw a streak of Luger lead into the advancing Germans. Brady heaved again, desperately, furiously. The cold motor failed to start.

Stirling snatched Brady's Luger from its holster and leaped back to the door. "Hurry," he croaked. "They're comin'! Plenty of 'em!"

Brady heaved again. The motor caught and its bellowing roar filled the hangar.

Stirling threw his useless gun at the Jerries and streaked it for the after pit.

"Get outside!" he bellowed. "Taxi to warm her up. Let me get this Maxim goin'. By damn, I'll show 'em!"

Brady sent the Rumpler streaking out through the open door. Instantly Stirling's gun went into action. And the man could shoot with a machine gun! Every single shot seemed to find Jerry flesh.

The motor was pulling smoothly now

as Brady gripped the stick and heaved. The wheels bounced, bounded, then lifted and they were climbing.

They were scarcely up a thousand feet when Stirling yelled through the tube. "This guy back here is bellowing like hell because he says I got my foot in his face."

Brady chuckled. "Turn him loose so I can collect my two hundred. But say, those Jerries are clever. They photograph our back areas with a big telescope, then next morning they photograph the same places again. They put the two films in a stereoscope that piles one picture on top of another. The tiniest pinpoint of difference in the two films looms up like the dickens, then they blast it out. You can't hide men from that stuff unless you bury 'em, because some bird is always queering things even when they're hidden in the woods. We'll just have to bomb those telescopes out as fast as they stick 'em in."

But Stirling and Schleicher were talking, so Brady listened in. Stirling said:

"Schleicher, by damn, you're a good sport so I'm going to save you a thousand bucks. Brady won't tell you so I will. I was the bird that started that revolution. Say, wait 'till I finish!—I know the buzzard that has the wells now and I got plenty on him so he better give 'em back, or else—"

"In that case," Schleicher said sportingly, "I'll bet you a hundred bucks I get 'em back."

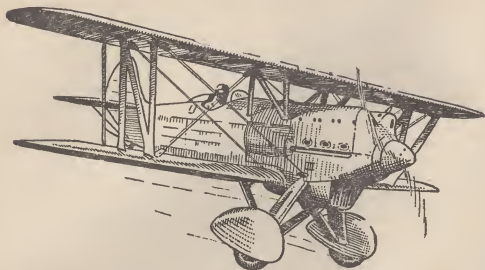
Stirling grunted. "Bet with Brady. He's got money."

"Say," Schleicher said suddenly, "it seems to me you were pretty sour on Brady a while back."

Stirling mumbled something, then, "You know, they's something about that buzzard that sort of gets under your skin after a while."

"Yea, gets under two hundred dollars worth," Schleicher said dryly.

THE STORY BEHIND THE COVER



IN THE action on the cover, the reader will have no difficulty in discerning that a group of British ships are bombing a combined airdrome and dirigible depot. The green ships and the yellow plane are easily recognizable as variations of the Hawker 'Fury,' so we need give little of our time to them.

The plane in the upper left of the picture, however, is of a type not nearly so common as the others. It is an Avia '34', if that means anything to you sky-hawks.

Germany, as you know, is exceedingly secretive concerning her air force and the new developments that she has undoubtedly made, so I'm frequently forced to ascribe to her ships which really are those of other countries.

Britain, of course, manufactures ships for a great number of countries. In fact, the green plane on the cover is a replica of a 'Fury' which was made for the Portugese Air Force. The similarity existing between this ship and the truly British ships can easily be seen.

When we speak of European aircraft, we unconsciously think of the products of Great Britain, Germany, France and Italy, but strangely, the Avia with which we are concerned is the creation of none of these, but of tiny Czechoslovakia.

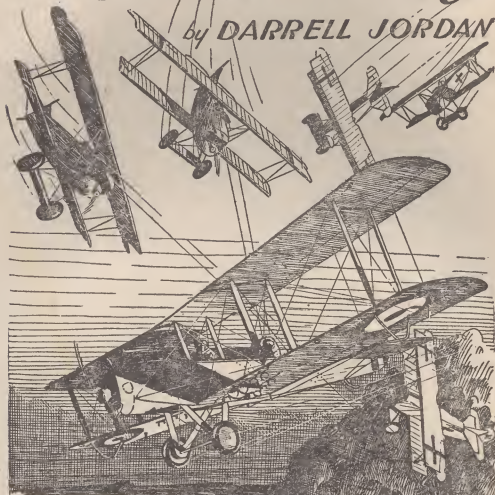
This country, of which we hear but little when the war drums throb in the sullen sky, is well equipped with beautiful, efficient ships of many varied types.

The Avia is a fighter of a single-seat type, and is powered by a 650 h.p. Hispano-Suiza engine of the latest design. It is unique in that it carries four machine guns,—two on the wings near the outer struts, which are not shown, and the usual pair,—one on each side of the fuselage. These latter two fire through invisible troughs.

This fighter has a speed of 200 m.p.h. at sea level and its service ceiling is 24,600 feet.

Flight to Glory

by DARRELL JORDAN



A bomb struck squarely
on the huge pile of shells.

*Headline Hartley meets a brass
hat with a heart as big as his boots
—a man who offers more than life
itself to the Greedy Gods of War!
Hartley supplies a bitter, crashing
finale to the Symphony of Satan—
as a Dead Man Flies to Glory!*

H EADLINE HARTLEY, onetime
ace newshawk, shot his pounding
Nieuport from under the boiling



streams of tracer and came twisting about in a steep chandelle. The Fokker which had been riding his tail skidded as it tried to follow suit. The jabbering Spandaus ceased their spiteful racketing as the Hun pilot dove to pick up speed. Instantly, Headline rolled out of the chandelle upon his back. He shoved the stick forward as the Nieuport hung momentarily upside down. The nose dropped, the song of the big Le Rhone rose to a maniacal shriek as the flailing prop bit air and hurtled the frail ship down in a vertical dive.

Below, the Hun was in the act of leveling out. As he flung a glance upward and glimpsed the cocarded shape slashing down at him, a swift expression of horror transfixed his smudged features. He fought desperately to roll the Fokker aside, just as the twin Vickers on the Nieuports' cowl flamed into life. Tracer shuttled down, splattered against the laboring Mercedes, drifted back to settle in the figure huddled in the pit. A grim smile crossed Headline's alert face as the Fokker twisted into its deadly spin.

The Nieuport came around swiftly as lead pattered ominously on the fuselage. Headline pointed his nose straight at the noon-day sun, and the single seater clawed its way skyward. Momentarily the streaks of yellowish smoke fell away, and looking back Headline saw the second Fokker wheeling in swift pursuit.

"Yank ace eludes vengeful Hun," Headline muttered, grinning. As usual, he spoke in the succinct clipped style of news headlines. Service as crack reporter for a great New York paper had originated that habit, and had been the reason for the nickname that had been given him at the Front. Now, gesturing mockingly back at the pursuing Fokker, he droned toward the cluster of winged shapes a mile in front of him. Here the remainder of the Yank mid-day patrol was fighting it out

with a slightly superior number of black crossed Fokkers.

As Hartley roared closer the grin disappeared, and his freckled, alert face that always suggested a scrappy terrier on the trail of game suddenly twisted into a worried frown. He shouldn't have allowed those two Fokkers to herd him so far from the main melee. The Huns had no doubt figured that once they had him away from help he would fall an easy victim to their combined fire. Headline had been willing to be decoyed aside, confident of his ability to defeat them both once he had plenty of room for maneuvering. But if he had taken too long, if anything had happened to Ben Harber while he had been tagging the Huns, why—

The next moment the frown disappeared. In the clutter of diving, twisting planes he caught sight of a familiar number. The Nieuport piloted by Ben Harber was riding a Fokker's tail, pouring in hot drags of lead. Ben was doing all right; now he could attend to that second Boche behind him.

So suddenly that the pursuing German was momentarily bewildered Headline pulled into a zoom that developed into a perfect Immelmann. As the Fokker shot past below him, the ex-news hawk half-rolled, dove until the wings of the Nieuport trembled on their pins, then came darting up beneath the Fokker's flat belly. The Vickers stuttered as tracer transfixed the Hun's fuselage, crawled rapidly toward the nose and pilot's pit. In that moment Headline had the Fokker dead to rights, cold meat for the next burst.

But that burst never came. Out of the corner of his eye Headline caught a glimpse of a Nieuport helling past, with a grim black winged shape snarling at its tail. Ben Harber! In some way that Fokker, or another, had turned the tables on Harber. Instantly forgetting his own help-

less prey, Headline whirled his ship to Harber's rescue.

Ben Harber had come about in an Immelmann, was racing back. The German followed the maneuver through smoothly, gaining on the Nieuport. The Spanndaus began to flame, and Headline could see bits of fabric rip from Harber's wings. A strut shivered as the Hun kicked rudder to compensate. Headline muttered profanely, pounding on his throttle for more speed. He dodged a flame-wrapped falling ship—then knifed directly between the Hun and the Nieuport.

For a split-second a collision seemed inevitable. Then the German dodged abruptly aside, and furious at being cheated of this cold meat, came boring in at Headline. The suicidal move had put the terrier ace at a disadvantage. For a moment lead ripped past his head, smashed into the instrument panel, whined mockingly from the hot Le Rhone. Headline faked a hit, went through two turns of a spin. The Boche threw caution to the winds, came charging in for the kill.

Instantly Headline twisted the Nieuport level, banked sharply and let the Vickers pour their lethal hail through the Fokker's cockpit. At the same time Headline saw that Harber had returned, and was firing too. But the kid's hands were shaky and none of his bursts went home. The Fokker was already falling and Headline turned his head away. Four Nieuports were swinging toward them, and he saw that the remaining Huns had reformed and were turning toward their drone. As the Yank flight formed for the return, Ben Harber waved and grinned.

Headline's thoughts were of Harber as the patrol spiraled down for the landing. The kid was all right, he told himself, but too easily rattled, too nervous for successful combat flying. If it hadn't been for the fact that Ben's father, General Harber of Wing,* had once done Headline a great

favor, the former reporter would have felt under no obligation to nurse the kid along. But if he could partially repay that favor by watching out for Ben, he intended to do it.

As the ships rolled to a stop in front of the hangars, Headline saw a tall, gray-haired officer standing in earnest conversation with Major Witherell. As Headline walked toward them Ben Harber ran past eagerly.

"Staff General greets flyer son," Headline murmured, watching.

General Harber broke off his talk with the bulldog featured Witherell as his son saluted, then thrust out his hand.

"Just downed my first Hun!" Ben Harber babbled excitedly. "Yeah, about fifteen minutes ago, over Marsonne. Isn't that right, Hartley?"

Captain Bill Norton, leader of the flight, had joined them. Headline knew Norton had seen what actually happened, and he forestalled the flight leader's attempt at impulsive denial with a swift wink.

"Sure you did, Ben," Headline confirmed. "As nice shooting as I ever saw."

"That's fine, son!" General Harber was beaming. He shook Ben's hand again. Pride and affection glowed on his strong, lined face. Watching, Headline could see the proof of what he had known for a long time; that nothing in the world meant anything to General Harber but his son.

"Better get out of those flying togs and make out your report," the General continued. "I'll see you again before I go back to Wing."

When Ben had left, Harber drew Headline to one side. "I always knew Ben had the making of a great combat flyer," he said proudly. "But Headline—I'm wondering if you'd mind sort of keeping an eye on the boy? You know, he's always been rather wild and headstrong.

I don't want him to get into any jams. Understand?"

"Gentlemen of the press never forget obligations," Headline returned warmly. "I'd do it even if you hadn't asked, General. I'm not apt to forget what you did for me back in New York."

THAT evening, after the General had returned to Wing H. Q., Ben Harber insisted on Norton, Headline, and three or four other pilots accompanying him to Rodette for a binge celebrating his victory. Headline could see that Ben actually thought it had been his shooting that had downed the Fokker, and the freckled pilot cautioned the rest to let him continue to think so.

"What's the gag, Headline?" one of them jeered. "You figure it good policy to keep in with the General?"

Something in Headline's face made the man wish he hadn't spoken.

"My reasons haven't anything to do with the fact that Ben's old man is a General," Headline stated coldly.

Soon after the party entered the estaminet Headline lost sight of Ben Harber, and almost two hours later he found him seated in a corner talking excitedly to a slim, dark-faced man in the uniform of the French Air Service. As Headline approached, Ben waved at his companion.

"Meet Lieutenant Duval," he introduced. "This is Hartley, a friend of mine."

As Duval arose to bow and shake hands ceremoniously, Headline was struck by the thought that somewhere he had seen this dapper officer before. Duval was smiling good-naturedly.

"Lieutenant Harber and myself find we have interests in common," the Frenchman said easily. "We're both interested in music. I am staying at an old chateau near town with some old family friends. I still have two weeks sick leave

left. I've just invited your friend to go to the chateau for the rest of the evening, and we'd like you to join us."

"Glad to," Headline accepted. "Let's go!"

Duval led the way to a shiny Renault parked outside and after a short drive halted the car before what had once been an imposing stone dwelling. A few minutes later they were seated in a shadowy conservatory, bottles and cigarettes beside them. Against one wall stood an expensive piano. Duval grinned, crossed to the instrument, and began to play.

Instantly the room was flooded with a rush of limpid melody. Music swelled from the ancient piano, pulsed under Duval's flying fingers. Immediately Headline knew that here was a master. He forgot time, forgot the nagging feeling that he had seen this man long ago, forgot everything under the spell of the rich harmony. He could see Ben Harber leaning forward in the gloom, lips parted, his ears drinking in every note with awed attention.

Duval switched swiftly to lilting French folk songs, finally to the stirring bars of military marches. Under this almost hypnotic influence Headline could see the lines of marching men, could visualize the glint of sunshine on prancing chargers and regimental banners. Duval brought the selection to a close with a swelling crescendo that left the air quivering.

Duval finished, turned to face them. Headline was silent, his brain churning. The throbbing harmony still tumbled through his mind as Harber whispered: "God! Wonderful, Duval, wonderful! You play like a master!"

"It is only practice, messieurs," the Frenchman disclaimed lightly.

For an hour they talked, then Harber said abruptly: "Look here, you are free for two weeks. Why not come out to our drome? We could have the piano brought

out—the gang would go crazy over your playing!”

Duval pursed his lips thoughtfully. “It is rather dull here, with only these old servants for company. And it is true that my leave is good for this entire sector. But your superiors would not permit—No, my friends, I’m afraid it is impossible.”

“But I can fix it!” Harber cried eagerly. “All my life I’ve been crazy for fine music. My father is General Harber; I’m sure I can arrange it. There can be no possible harm.”

Headline said nothing, gripped by a queer feeling of impending trouble. “Yank ace feels strange hunch,” he muttered soberly.

Yet after more argument Duval agreed to visit the 12th if permission could be granted. Ben Harber immediately called his father; the outcome was that the next morning a truck deposited Lieutenant Duval’s piano and personal equipment at the drome. A space was cleared at one end of the long recreation room for the instrument, and that night Duval won the thunderous applause of the entire commissioned personnel by holding them entranced for two solid hours.

Major Witherell called Headline into his office after the field had quieted down.

“What do you think of this Duval?” he asked, bluntly.

Headline shrugged. “I can’t help but think I’ve seen the man before. Probably heard him play in a concert somewhere; the fellow is a master, no question of that. But once or twice tonight it seemed to me that something *evil*, something, well—weird, crept into that music! Sounds crazy, I know.”

“The hardboiled newshawk going superstitious on me?” Witherell grinned. Then: “But you’re right, I had the same feeling. Well, it’s a change for the men,

and God knows they need it, what with the trouble that’s riding us lately.”

“You mean that ammo dump that Jerry’s guarding so well?”

“Right.” The S. C.’s face grew haggard. “They’ve tried everything possible to blow that dump up—and we’re right where we were a week ago. The dump is so heavily guarded by air patrols that a bombing flight can’t get within miles of it. Twice this outfit has flown escort, and twice we’ve lost plenty of our ships as well as the bombers we were supposed to protect. H. Q. has been on my neck a half dozen times. If it hadn’t been that General Harber is a reasonable sort, I’d have lost my command by now. That dump *has* to go before the Huns launch their attack. Put that newspaper brain of yours to work, will you?”

“The press promises to co-operate fully,” Headline cracked. But his face was grim as he left the office.

Another attempt at the ammo dump was made the next morning—and the Huns were waiting, seeming to know the exact time the bombers were due. And before the flights could return, a strong Boche patrol strafed the 12th’s drome, then empty of winged defenders, and one hangar was destroyed, the field pitted with gaping holes.

“Huns tipped to American plans,” Headline growled sourly, surveying the damage. It was plain to him then that the air squadrons on the other side of the lines were informed of the 12th’s every move. Witherell scoffed at first, then after two more patrols had been ambushed and escaped with heavy losses, he was convinced.

“It isn’t necessarily true that we have a spy here at the drome,” he told Headline. “The leak may be at H. Q.”

“Crack newspaper man cudgels brains for answer to riddle,” Headline returned.

"You notice this trouble starts right after Lieutenant Duval shows up? But at that I can't see how he could have been the spy. How can he tip the Boches off? He hardly leaves the buildings. I know he hasn't been off the field, or taken a plane up. I'm sure he hasn't been flashing signals at night; I've been watching him. Just the same I think you'd better order him off the field."

"But I can't, without proof," Witherell objected. "He'd raise no end of a howl. The French would be sore, and we might get into a hot mess of international complications. We'll have to wait awhile longer."

"That dump has got to be destroyed without much more waiting," Headline snapped. "I wish I could remember where I've seen the bird before."

Each night without fail Duval had played for the assembled squadron. He had easily become the most popular man in the outfit. And young Harber had become his closest friend. Once or twice, when Headline had suggested he find out more about Duval, Ben had objected indignantly.

That night just as dusk settled over the field a Cadillac bearing a star studded flag rolled upon the tarmac and General Harber climbed out. The pilots of the 12th were assembled in the recreation room, silent, as if realizing the import of the General's visit.

"Men," the General began abruptly. "I hardly need repeat to you the necessity for accomplishing our objective in regard to this supply dump. Several times our patrols have failed to reach a point necessary to release their bombs. It is evident that ordinary methods will never work in this case. Gentlemen, a plan has been evolved at H. Q. That dump must be a memory by eight o'clock tomorrow morning!"

HE PAUSED, his keen eyes glancing over the assembled flyers. "As you know, I've always admired the work of this squadron, and I'm sure you want a chance to turn your failures on this assignment into success. That is why I have selected this squadron for the attempt. Here is the plan:—shortly before dawn a D. H. will take off from this field, with a dummy concealed in the rear pit. The ship will fly to a certain field behind the German lines, land, then contrive to be seen taking off with the dummy passenger. The natural German reaction will be that a spy is being picked up. With their drive impending, the Huns will do everything possible to prevent a spy being returned to the American lines. We hope that the D. H. will be able to draw away at least a large part of the Fokkers in pursuit. Then, while Boche ships all along the line are trying to cut off the D. H., this squadron will take off loaded with bombs, fly low, and make an attempt to reach the dump while the Fokker guard is away!"

No one spoke, no one moved. General Harber's glinting eyes swept them keenly. "I need hardly add that the pilot of the two-seater will be taking a grave risk. So I'm asking for volunteers for that assignment."

A dozen voices instantly broke the silence. Among them was Ben Harber's. Headline saw the veteran officer's eyes slowly scan the ring of faces, finally settle upon his son. The General's lined face paled, but his voice was steady as he spoke.

"All right, Lieutenant Harber. The assignment is yours."

Headline could realize something of the cost of those words. Harber knew the danger into which he was sending his idolized son. But, too, he would not play favorites.

"Why the dummy in the rear pit instead of a real gunner?" Headline inquired.

"Because the German fire will naturally be concentrated on the supposed spy," Harber explained. "If they manage to place a burst or two in the dummy, they may draw away and let the pilot escape, thinking they have accomplished their purpose. That is all, gentlemen. Major Witherell will be in charge from now on. I'll be down shortly after dawn to receive your report in person."

General Harber shook hands silently with Ben, then strode to his waiting car.

It was an hour before dawn when Headline suddenly awoke. Music, soft and silvery, drifted across the silent field. He listened, realizing that the sounds came from the deserted recreation room. Duval, playing again! But there was nothing startling about that. On other occasions Duval had chosen early morning for brief periods of playing. As Headline listened it seemed that the keys were beating a slower tempo than usual, that the music itself seemed choppy and discordant. He heard a sound beside him, and saw Ben Harber rolling from the Nissen's other bunk.

"Nearly time for me to take off," Harber muttered sleepily.

Headline wasn't listening. Something in his memory had clicked sharply. Suddenly he leaped to his feet. Now he knew! Memory of Duval's identity that had troubled him for days came swiftly to him now. He seized Harber, jerked him fully awake.

"Now I remember where I've seen your pal!" Headline snapped. "Listen; a year before the War started a man was arrested in New York City on an espionage charge. They didn't have enough on him to justify prosecution, but he was deported. I was covering the story. He looked different then, wore a mustache. But it was Duval! And he was traveling

under a German passport! Ben, your pal Duval is a Hun spy!"

Harber gaped. "You're dreaming!" he jeered. "Don't be silly; Duval's all right. You've got your faces mixed. Anyway, even if he is the man you remember, that doesn't prove he's spying here. I tell you he's nothing but an ordinary French flyer, and a crack musician."

"That's the angle that fooled me," Headline rasped. "I was trying to think where I'd heard him play; thought he must have been a concert pianist. But he's our man, all right. He's the bird that's been passing all the dope along to the Huns. You've been pretty thick with him, Ben. I'd advise you to think fast!"

"But how could he do that?" Harber objected. "He hasn't been up, he surely hasn't signalled to Boche planes. No one's been here to see him."

"That's what I wondered for awhile," Headline growled. "Now I think I know. Come on—we'll see. Yank plays hunch to the end!"

They hurried across the dark field toward the recreation building. The music had stopped now, and as they cautiously entered the room it appeared to be deserted. Headline lighted the lamp, then swore as he remembered he was unarmed. But the place was empty, Duval evidently had completed his playing.

Headline crossed to the piano, pulled it out from the wall. With the aid of his pocketknife he removed the sheet of wood that concealed the interior of the instrument. Harber, bending over his shoulder, gasped in astonishment. Inside the over-size piano case was a powerful, compact, wireless sending outfit!

Headline felt a great rage surging through his brain. "I got to thinking about his morning workouts and remembered they always came after orders for a special patrol had been issued the night before. See that special aerial? And the

wires leading to the keys? When the switch was on, he was sending messages while he was playing! Double crossing us right under our noses! Black keys for dashes, white ones for dots! And by God, here's his code book!"

Headline glanced into the book, then slipped it into his pocket. He backed the piano to its former position, then stepped into the room.

"Reporter uncovers clever spy plot!" he muttered. "I guess that settles Mr. Duval—"

"I wouldn't be too sure, Lieutenant," a cold voice interrupted.

Both Yanks whirled. Duval stood behind them, a small automatic covering them alertly.

"You found me out, yes," Duval gritted. "But I am not dead yet, Messieurs!"

Ben Harber's face was white and twitching. "I told this guy part of what he needed," he cried to Headline. "It's all my fault! The double-crossing, murdering snake!"

Then, before Headline could move to stop him, Ben Harber sprang straight toward the muzzle of Duval's automatic.

There came two spiteful cracks, two tiny jets of flame. Ben stopped abruptly, arms flung up. A choking cry gurgled from his throat. He stumbled, fell. Crimson soaked through his tunic. Headline flung himself forward, and the gun spat again. The bullet creased his head, and the shock sent him down. From the floor he glimpsed Duval leaping through the doorway.

Headline's first thought was of pursuit. Then he hesitated. The spy was fleeing, thinking both Yanks dead. Headline turned back to Ben Harber. The kid managed a twisted smile.

"Sorry—Headline," the words were mere threads of sound. "Tell—Dad—"

Abruptly the dark eyes glazed, and Harber's body stiffened into the rigidity

of death. Headline's brain was racing. General Harber—it would break the old man's heart to realize that Ben had been the cause of the squadron's betrayal. But need he know? Headline remembered the General's request: "Watch out for Ben."

Headline's eyes were wet as a plan formed swiftly in his mind. He placed Ben's body in the shadows, then turned toward the door. A Nieuport appeared in the hangar doorway, then raced swiftly down the field. Number 43. Headline smiled grimly. Duval was escaping in his, Headline's, own ship. He turned back to the piano. Five minutes later he blew out the lamp and headed toward the hangars. He still had more than an hour before the field would come alive. And in that hour he had much to accomplish.

The shots from the light automatic had evidently passed unheard, for only one mech was busy at the hangars.

"Lieutenant Duval just came out in a hurry, said he'd had a rush call from his outfit, and that you'd told him to use your bus," the mech said anxiously. "Not regular, I know, but I thought it was all right."

"That depends on you," Headline rasped. "If you do as I tell you, and never breath a word of what happens tonight, your hide is safe. If you talk, you'll be in plenty of trouble."

The man's scared face was proof enough of his obedience. The De Havilland that Harber was to use was already on the field. Under Headline's terse orders the Liberty was twisted into life. Then, while the motor warmed the two of them fitted bombs into the D. H.'s racks. Headline went back to the recreation building and returned, staggering under the weight of Harber's limp body. As the greaseball stared he stowed the dead flyer into the rear pit, strapped him securely down out of sight. Headline fastened the dummy to a wing well within his reach.

The motor roared, and the two seater lumbered down the field and into the air. Dawn was still some time away as the ex-newspaper man gunned the big ship toward the lines.

Over the ruins of a shell shattered wood Headline jerked loose the dummy and dropped it overside. Then, his freckled face set grimly, he headed straight toward the ammo dump back of Moselle.

Minutes passed swiftly as the lines reeled dimly beneath the D. H.'s hurrying wings. Headline's eyes scanned the lightning sky watchfully. Suddenly he saw a cluster of darting shapes ahead of him, and ruddered aside. A Nieuport was fleeing back toward the American lines, and a half dozen Fokkers were swarming vengefully around it.

HEADLINE could see a figure in the cockpit half standing, waving wildly. But the Fokkers closed in, and their Spandaus chattered with vicious abandon. The Nieuport, headed off, twisted again toward German territory. And again the Huns closed. Traced smoked across the sky, making little streaks against the foggy dawn. The Nieuport staggered, reeled on.

The Fokkers were ripping it to pieces in mid-air, but in Headline's heart was no pity. He watched the ships fade behind him, the Nieuport still staggering, zig-zagging with desperate lunges. Then, just before the battle faded entirely from sight, flame blossomed brightly from the cocarded ship, swiftly wrapped it in a crimson mantle. And the Nieuport fell, wires wailing a mournful funeral dirge down the gray sky. Headline nodded grimly and settled deeper in his seat.

The tattered buildings of Moselle appeared faintly below him, then fled behind the droning De Haviland. Ahead loomed a great meadow, spotted by camouflaged heaps and piles of what

Headline knew was high explosive. Abruptly the sky was alive with darting Fokkers. They came roaring in, peered at the D. H., then as Headline waved and nodded, the Fokker pilots waved in return and banked away toward their drome. By the time he had reached a spot nearly over the dump, the Maltese crossed ships were dots in the distance.

Dark objects detached themselves from the two-seater's racks, went hurtling downward. A scarlet bloom of flame spread on the earth, followed instantly by a roaring concussion. Other thunderous crashes followed as bomb after bomb plunged down upon that explosive-covered field. And abruptly a gargantuan thunderous smash spread over the earth as a bomb struck squarely upon a mound of huge shells.

The concussion flung the D. H. tumbling like a leaf in a gale. For a long moment Headline could only cling to the controls and pray feverishly that the D. H. would level out before it crashed. Then he was away from the direct force of the explosions that were leaping and spreading over the entire area of the dump. And the Fokkers, which had started back toward him at the first explosion, were speeding in at him.

He pounded on the throttle and the drone of the Liberty rose to a high pitched shriek. The faster Fokkers were making the mistake of crossing above the raving ammo dump. They too were caught in the hurricane of boiling air, tossed wildly about. Two of them collided, went staggering down to crash in the vortex of the hell below. And the others lost time leveling out—time that Headline spent gunning the D. H. toward home.

Near the lines a pair of ominous shadows caught up, and lead spattered the fleeing D. H. Headline glanced back. There was a chance that the Huns would not expect him to turn and fight. With a

lightning movement of stick and rudder he jerked the D. H. around in a tight bank. A Fokker was above him, momentarily bewildered. The cowl Vickers broke into savage song. Lead ripped into the Mercedes, snapped back to the cockpit.

The Fokker keeled over and dove drunkenly. Headline knew that it could never pull out. The second Boche slammed lead viciously into the two-seater, and Headline could hear the slugs ripping into Ben Harber's body behind him. But he rode through the storm of lead and before more of the Huns could catch up he was diving down over the Yank trenches.

Headline saw running figures on the 12th's drome as he circled the field, purposely wobbling the D. H.'s wings. Then he dropped swiftly toward the curtain of trees at the far end of the tarmac. The two-seater struck, bounced, then dug a wingtip into the ground and slammed into a huge tree. Headline's belt was loosened; at the last moment he jumped. He was on his feet, bruised and muddy, before the roar of the crash had died. Cars and men were careening toward the wreckage. Screened by the trees Headline lifted Ben Harber's body into the front cockpit. Then he ducked behind the trees, made his way along the border of the field unseen.

Apparently just coming from the huts, he joined the crowd around the debris. General Harber was there, and Headline saw tears coursing down the old soldier's cheeks. They lifted Ben Harber out of the crushed fuselage and laid him gently on the ground. Major Witherell said softly: "I just had a flash from the Front, General. A Limey dawn patrol saw the whole thing, saw your son dive through the Fokkers, bomb the dump, and fight his way back."

"For some reason Ben saw fit to disobey orders," Harber choked. "But it

was because he only wanted to risk his own life. And he succeeded where others failed. It was glorious, Major—glorious."

Headline saw the pride gleaming through the grief on the General's face, and he knew he had repaid his own debt.

Hours later he told everything to Major Witherell in the S.C.'s office. "But how did you get into position to bomb without being swamped by Fokkers?" Witherell demanded.

"I knew Duval must have sent a message explaining the General's plans," Headline explained, "so after I saw he was using my plane to escape I sent another."

"I had his code book, and code signature, you know. In my message I told the Huns to disregard former warning, but to watch for a Nieuport, number 43, which would attempt to crash into the H. E. at the dump and explode it. I also said that I was suspected, and was about to escape in a De Haviland two-seater. I signed Duval's Intelligence number to the message."

"His own piano played his death march, then," said the Major slowly.

Headline nodded. "That mech won't dare talk. Only you and I need know what actually happened, or even that Duval was a spy. You can smooth over his disappearance, and the two of us can remove that wireless set from the piano without being seen. We'll keep the thing as a souvenir."

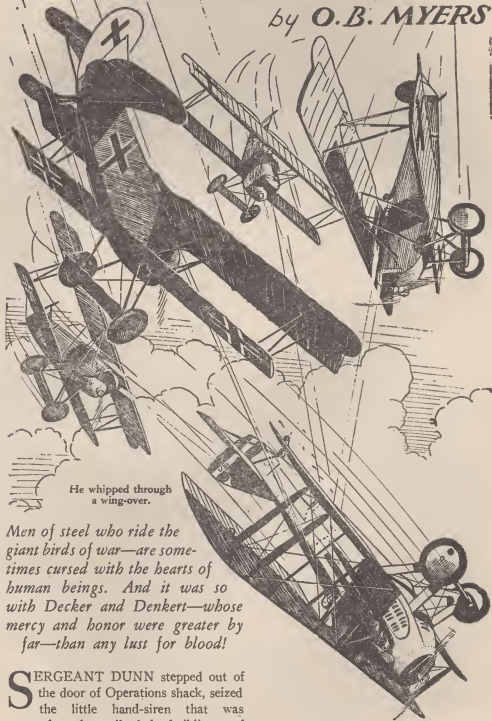
"And all this credit?" Witherell inquired. "You're willing for all that to go to Ben Harber?"

Headline waved his hand grandly. "Newspaper men are the unsung heroes of the age, anyway."

Witherell stared at the door that Headline had banged. "And they tell you that news reporters are the hardest boiled chisellers alive," he jeered. "Like hell!"

Aces and Death

by O.B. MYERS



He whipped through
a wing-over.

*Men of steel who ride the
giant birds of war—are some-
times cursed with the hearts of
human beings. And it was so
with Decker and Denkert—whose
mercy and honor were greater by
far—than any lust for blood!*

SERGEANT DUNN stepped out of
the door of Operations shack, seized
the little hand-siren that was
screwed to the wall of the building, and
ground the crank as fast as he could turn

it. From its mouth a raucous screech shivered across the drome of the 8th Pursuit.

The effect was like tossing a brickbat into a bees' nest. Men appeared from every direction, running at top speed. But there was no confusion. Dungareed mechanics hurried toward the Spads that stood waiting on the deadline, reaching for the props. Pilots galloped up from the barracks and the mess, pulling on helmets as they came. On the heels of the sergeant, Major Wayne emerged from headquarters, shouting orders.

"A crowd of Boches headed for Sanceville! Some Halberstadts, with pursuit protection. Probably aiming to strafe those rest billets in the woods there. You can't get there ahead of them, but cut them off on their way out. Bear west, and you'll meet—"

Before the last words were out of his mouth, two motors roared simultaneously. The pilots, leaping for their cockpits, needed no further instructions. Being 'on alert', they were prepared for anything; their motors were warmed in readiness. Within sixty seconds the first ship zoomed off the ground, and others were rolling.

Dave Decker was still trying to fasten his chin strap as his Spad lifted its wheels and took the air. It careened crazily over the fringe of trees, then settled into a steady climb as he finished with the stubborn buckle and gave his whole attention to the controls. Though he had run scarcely forty yards to the cockpit, he was breathing heavily; the sense of excitement, rather than the exertion, speeded up his pulse.

Sanceville was not far from the field, and he had been in the air less than two minutes before he saw planes above the horizon ahead. At first they were mere specks; quickly they resolved into thick wings and blunt nosed fuselages, and in another moment he was able to recognize

types. Four were bi-plane Halberstadts, the rest Fokkers. They were all dipping and circling over a certain spot on the ground.

Dave sent a perfunctory glance toward the earth, then quickly he looked again. When he identified the buildings above which those Germans were wheeling, he gave a gasp of astonished dismay. The Halberstadts were sliding low, and seemed to be dropping small bombs, or grenades; the Fokkers were diving to rake the roofs with their Spandaus.

"Why, the dirty swine!" he growled.

The muscles in his throat tightened, and his scalp prickled beneath his helmet. His lips twitched convulsively, and his eyes blazed with anger. With another heartfelt curse, he urged his Spad forward into the midst of the dogfight that was already beginning.

His comrades ahead of him were attacking the Halberstadts and at once the Fokkers rushed to interfere. Dave found one of the latter banking on his right, and whirled to meet it. His guns spoke first, and the Fokker zoomed out of danger. As it corkscrewed onto its back to come down again, Dave snapped out another burst, and had the satisfaction of seeing his tracers bite at a dark-hued wing-tip.

Peering straight at that wing-tip, he thought for an instant that he was seeing an insignia new to him. But then he realized it was only that the Fokker's wing had been recently repaired; fresh strips of fabric, doped on over replaced spars and ribs, showed up plainly in the form of the letter Z, where the black cross was normally located. The other wing-tip was marked in the usual German fashion.

He had no sooner settled this point in his mind than the Fokker whirled in an attempt to take him on the flank. Dave's hands and feet moved like lightning, in

automatic reflex action. His Spad shot up and flipped through a wing-over that gave him a momentary advantage. But when he tried to use it for a direct burst, the Boche avoided his lunge smartly, and careened away in a curving zoom.

Dave had no time to follow the rest of the battle. He and his single antagonist were hotly engaged, drifting gradually back toward the northeast as they whirled in tight spirals and met charge with counter charge, volley with volley. A minute passed, and then another, as Spad and Fokker whirled and plunged and slashed, with neither able to seize and hold a telling advantage. Then without warning, Dave tried an old trick, but a smart one.

He flattened out and for a moment sat perfectly still, his hand poised on the stick. The Fokker flipped about, and roared down at his tail, guns crackling. With a jerk of the wrist, Dave threw the Spad into the first turn of a left-hand spin. But the next jerk, quicker than the first, snapped it out, and a sudden pull lifted its nose to the zenith.

The Fokker, starting down after him, was half in and half out of a twisting dive, caught in a moment of surprised indecision. Dave's long, harsh burst raked its belly from cockpit to tail.

He hauled the Spad out of the stall, as the Fokker hurtled down past him. Whipping over on his nose, Dave plunged in pursuit. His fingers, itching on the triggers, were ready to deliver the finishing blow. But when he saw what was happening, he hesitated, then waited spell-bound.

That vertical volley had apparently severed one of the German's control cables. The elevators of the Fokker were no longer working, though rudder and ailerons seemed to be all right. The ship was dipping and careening dizzily, like a leaf in a breeze, and always swooping lower and lower. It was almost out of control, but not quite, and the pilot, faced with a

certain crash was fighting bravely for his life.

Fascinated by the struggle before his eyes, Dave wheeled into a glide and watched. Very cleverly the Boche was juggling his throttle, using the pull of the motor to balance the missing elevator effect. Opened up, the nose lifted; throttled down a little, the nose dropped off. But it was only partial control at best, and could not last long. He was going to earth, there was no question about that. His only hope was to ease the impact as much as possible.

Dave saw the German plane sink in a final swoop, and held his breath. He saw the exhausts sputter blue smoke, as the pilot blurped a last time. The Fokker flattened out, then pancaked.

"By God, he made it!" cried Dave in frank admiration.

That Boche was certainly a flyer. His touch on the throttle was perfect, for nothing short of perfection would have sufficed. The Fokker touched its wheels, bounced once, and then as the man in the cockpit slammed the switch off, rolled evenly to a stop.

GAZING overside, Dave was surprised to see that the field where his foe had landed was close to his own drome, separated from it only by a belt of woods. He glanced quickly back into the west, and perceived that the rest of the enemy raiders were either down or racing frantically for the lines. Immediately he closed his own throttle.

The field was smooth enough, and to land his Spad without mishap was no trick at all. As it joggled to a halt a short distance from the Fokker, Dave sprang out and trotted across the thick grass. He saw that the German pilot still sat in his cockpit, where he had pulled off his helmet and was mopping his face with a white silk handkerchief.

Unthinking at first, Dave spoke in English. "You're my prisoner. If you've got a revolver, you'd better hand it over."

The Boche looked at him blankly and shook his head. Suddenly Dave remembered that he had studied German for four years, and repeated his words in that language. The other's face brightened instantly.

"No, I haven't," he replied. "You can look for yourself."

He slid out of the cockpit to the ground, and Dave glanced sharply under the cowl. Then he turned to face his erstwhile antagonist.

An observer, had there been one, would have been struck by the two figures. It was not exactly a physical resemblance of features, but a similarity of type. Both were young, with sandy hair and clear blue eyes, and slim, athletic limbs; both faces were molded in the clean frankness of youth. The German was somewhat the paler of the two from his recent tilt with death but Dave was scowling angrily.

"What the devil was the idea of bombing a hospital?" he demanded.

The Boche raised his eyebrows. "A hospital?"

"Yes. You saw the red crosses on the roof, didn't you? Not only that, but it happens to be a hospital full of German prisoners."

The Jerry gave a little scornful laugh. "Do you take us for fools, across the way? We know that that's an ammunition storage dump, in those sheds north of Sanceville. We are aware that you people paint red crosses on the roofs, just to keep us away!"

Dave's jaw dropped. "You're crazy! That's an evacuation hospital!"

The German was still laughing. "Don't tell me you believe that yourself! Why, our intelligence tipped us off to that trick long ago, and we have orders to pay special attention to that point."

Dave controlled his anger by swearing feelingly in English, and then reverted to German once more. "Damn it, I'll show you! Wait!"

It was only a few moments before a sidecar dashed through the woods lane, followed by an automobile containing the major. After a few formalities, Dave got permission from the C. O. to accept the German officer's parole, and to use the touring car for an hour. A short time later the two flyers were seated side by side in the tonneau, being driven along a rutted cross road. They were stiffly silent; the Boche's face betraying a faintly amused smile, Dave ominously grim.

They came to a crossing, turned left, and almost at once stopped in the center of a cluster of long, low buildings. Here was a scene of frightful, heart-rending confusion. One of the sheds was on fire, others had gaping holes in their roofs, and the open ground was scarred by craters. Orderlies, stretcher bearers, and doctors in khaki hurried in all directions, cursing when they had the breath to do so. But the most savage, heart-felt curses came from the patients themselves.

Most of them, as Dave had said, were wounded German prisoners, but there were scattered French and Americans as well. Many groaned in agony with the pain of fresh wounds, or of old wounds torn open; others screamed in terror from the interior of the burning barracks. There was a long row of motionless forms, under blankets, who would never groan again.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" gasped the German pilot. "You were right!"

His face was white as snow, his hands shook, his eyes bulged with horror at the terrible sight before him.

"I told you," said Dave simply. "You see the red crosses on the roofs? They tell the truth, don't they?"

The Boche nodded, choking. "But our

Kommandant, he told us—It is horrible! And this is not the last. We have orders to strafe this spot frequently—and the other, near Toulette! *Gott*, this cannot be permitted to go on! We must do something—tell them—”

Dave looked at him closely. His grief and dismay were plainly genuine. Like Dave himself, he was obviously a youth of honor and ideals, to whom war flying had been a vivid, stirring game. Never before had he realized that the intrigues and propaganda of the higher-ups could make it into such a brutal atrocity as this.

As the car turned back the way it had come, Dave said, “Tell them? How? I’d be only too glad to see that a message was dropped on your field. But would it do any good?”

Then Jerry shook his head. “*Nein*. They would not believe. They would take it for deceit, even if I wrote it myself.”

Suddenly Dave leaned close, so that the driver could not hear his words. “What if you went back and told them, yourself?”

The German stared. “But, yes—they would listen to me. I—”

“Will you give me your word of honor to return here immediately, just as soon as you have explained to your *Kommandant*?”

The German stared harder than before. But then his jaw tightened and his eye gleamed “On my word of honor, without fail! But how?”

“Wait,” cautioned Dave. At his direction the car took them, not to the drome of the 8th, but to the field where the Boche had come down. Here several mechanics, one wearing cartridge belt and holster, were examining the Fokker with interest; the ship had been repaired by the simple act of splicing the parted cable.

“The major thought you’d like to fly her back to the field yourself.” one of the men said to Dave.

“You bet,” was his reply. “She’s my prize, isn’t she? How about starting up the motor? Come here, Jerry, and show us what to do.”

To the Boche he said in German, “Come over by the cockpit.”

Two of the men, lacking chocks, held the wing-tips; another whirled the prop. Dave, standing by the side of the fuselage, took directions from the Jerry and flicked the switch. The big Mercedes, still warm, started quickly, and ticked over like a clock. Dave leaned it.

“What’s that second lever, next to the throttle?” he asked.

It was, the German explained, for manual spark control.

“Better get in and show me how it works,” said Dave casually.

The Jerry mounted the step and threw one leg over the fairing. As his ear came close to Dave’s head, Dave hissed, “Smack me on the side of the head. I’ll fall—grab the throttle and take off—”

The German reacted instantly. He struck with more than enough force to make it look realistic, and Dave’s head rang honestly as he flopped flat on his face. The exhausts blasted out at once with a roar.

THE men at the wing-tips had let go as the motor idled, and the Fokker started moving away from them before they could regain a grip. The one guard who was armed had been standing near the tail, and the first blast of the slipstream filled his eyes with dust. He grabbed the Colt from its holster and began firing, but his aim was wild. By the time he emptied the magazine and fumbled for a reload, the Fokker was lifting its wheels from the far edge of the field, out of range.

Dave rolled over, holding his head. “Gosh—what happened?”

They told him with excited yells and

curses, pointing at the fast receding speck in the sky.

"Oh, Lord! Will we catch hell for this!" groaned Dave.

"Yeah, me especially," grated the man with the revolver.

Dave climbed to his feet, his ears still ringing. "Don't worry, Anson," he said. "I'll explain to the major that it wasn't your fault."

Back on the drome of the 8th, a short time later, their report was greeted with cries of dismay. "That just shows you," growled the irate C. O., "what a Boche's word of honor is worth."

"Could I see you alone a minute, sir?" asked Dave, aside.

Closeted in the major's private office, he said, "He didn't break his parole, sir. I gave him permission myself; in fact, I suggested it, and helped him carry it out." He went on to explain exactly what he had done, and why. When he finished, the major shook his head.

"I don't know, Decker. It's very irregular. I can understand your desire to stop the strafing of hospitals. Perhaps, under the same circumstances, I might have done the same thing myself. But, officially I can't approve. However, I'll make no report on the incident tonight. If he comes back before dark, the whole thing will work out greatly to your credit. If not—" he shrugged his shoulders, frowning.

"Oh, he'll come back, I'm sure," averred Dave. "He gave me his word of honor, and he looked like—well, like the kind of a guy who'd keep it. By the way, you took his papers, didn't you, major?"

"Yes they're here." The C. O. picked up an oblong folder from the desk and flicked it open. Looking at the photograph, and the name beneath it, for the first time, he grunted in surprise, and then stared hard at Dave. "You ever

know that Boche before, Decker?" he asked.

"Never saw him before in my life," replied Dave. "Why?"

"His name," muttered the major. "It's Denkert. Dagmar Denkert. Sounds almost like a German version of David Decker, don't it?"

"It does, at that," admitted Dave uneasily. "But I tell you—"

"All right, all right." The C. O. waved him aside. "Forget it—until we see if he comes back."

Dave moved out onto the tarmac to begin scanning the sky.

IN the meantime, a Fokker on whose one wing-tip could be seen the rough outline of a letter Z droned across the lines and hurried deep into German territory. The pilot payed little attention to the air about him, but raced due north until he came within sight of a large, square field near a crossroad, bordered by three brown hangars and several barracks and smaller buildings. Here he cut his motor and angled quickly into a glide that ended on the dusty tarmac of the German drome.

"The *Herr Kapitän* von Marheidt?" he asked at once, vaulting to the ground. "He is inside?"

Getting an affirmative reply, he strode directly to headquarters shack, where a few moments later he was executing a stiff salute in the *Kommandant's* office. The officer behind the desk was a small man, but wiry and hard in appearance; one ear had been disfigured by a sabre scar, and he continually held his head on one side as if he were listening for some faint sound at his feet.

"You did not return with your patrol, Denkert?" he snapped.

"No, sir," replied the pilot. "I was shot down."

The *Kommandant's* eyebrows rose in

astonishment. The young flyer proceeded to explain. He passed quickly over the details of the combat to describe what he had seen on the ground near Sanceville.

"We agreed, the *Amerikaner* and I, that you must be told about that hospital. He let me escape—even helped me—so that I could bring the information in person, on condition that I give him my word of honor to return immediately. That is how I am here, *Herr Kapitan*."

The *Kommandant*, who had been listening expressionlessly, now suddenly threw back his head and began to laugh derisively.

"*Ganz gut*, Denkert! You are smarter than I thought you. *Ja!* You have slipped out of their fingers very cleverly. A good story, *ja!*"

The pilot's eyes widened a little. "But I'm going back, sir," he stated flatly. "At once. I promised."

The *Kapitan's* mirthless grin changed to a snarling leer. "Are you crazy, Denkert? You're staying right here, where you belong."

"But, my word of honor!" cried the flyer hotly.

"Don't be a fool!" grated the *Kommandant*. "What do you think this is, a pretty little game? This is war. In war all is fair, and a man's word is not worth the breath he uses to utter it. Do you think a Yankee would come back here, under the same circumstances? Never! Forget it!"

The pilot first turned red, then went pale as a sheet. His jaws came together until the muscles bulged, and his eyes flashed. But he had been trained to implicit obedience of his superiors, and habit told.

"*Ja, mein Herr*," he gulped. "But our intelligence,—you will notify them about that hospital?"

The *Kapitan* grinned evilly. "Some time,—perhaps."

Leutnant Denkert's jaw dropped. "But you must tell them at once! Our planes are bombing helpless wounded men, Germans—"

"What of it?" growled the officer. "The damned Yankees would only let them die anyway. Besides, you were probably deceived, anyway. That *Amerikaner* led you to a different spot, no doubt, just to create an impression. We are reliably informed that the allies mark some of their ammunition dumps with red crosses;—that is enough. The raids will continue."

The pilot, horrified, was silent for a moment. Then he burst into a storm of violent protest. The *Kommandant* rose slowly, his eyes cold, his arm extended. "*Leutnant* Denkert! To your quarters at once!"

The flyer choked, pulled himself together with an effort, and managed to execute a salute. Then he turned and reeled through the door. Emerging into the open, he hesitated only an instant. Then he turned right, past an open window, and strode resolutely toward the hangars.

"*Korporal!* Start my motor again!" he commanded.

The surprised non-com did as he was bid. In a few seconds the Mercedes, still warm was turning over. The pilot, who had buckled on his helmet, put his foot on the step. But as he was about to vault into the cockpit, something jabbed his ribs and a cold voice said, "Denkert! What are you doing?"

"I'm flying across the lines—" he began. But then he saw that it was a Luger that the *Kommandant* pressed into the small of his back.

"On the contrary," barked the *Kapitan*. "You are going to your barracks. You are under arrest. You are not to leave this field under any circumstances. Do you hear that, hangar crew? *Leutnant*

Denkert is not to be given a plane at any time, until I so order. *Versteht?*"

The pilot, face flaming, backed slowly away toward the barracks.

Three days later, as Dave was about to step into his Spad, Major Wayne emerged from headquarters and crossed the tarmac toward him.

"I've heard from Chaumont," he said. "The whole incident had to be reported, of course. I'm afraid it's a court martial, Decker,—unless something turns up in the next day or so, at least."

Dave gave the C. O. a long steady look, and muttered under his breath, "Court-martial!" Then he climbed into his cockpit and took off.

HIS thoughts were as grim as his expression. The Germans were his enemies; he had never liked them, but neither had he felt for them as individuals any intense personal hatred. Now, however, he hated them bitterly, and especially did he despise a certain tall, light-haired young aviator named Dagmar Denkert. That man he had trusted, and his trust had been foully abused. He growled in his throat, and his fingers itched with the hope of encircling that German pilot's throat.

The cause behind his betrayal made him doubly bitter. There was no doubt in his mind, now, that the bombing of the hospital had been deliberate, and that the same thing would be repeated in the future. The German pilot's horror at the shambles of Sanceville had all been feigned, nothing but a bluff to effect his own escape. To a man like that, slaying and maiming helpless, wounded men in their beds meant absolutely nothing.

The B Flight patrol crossed the lines at the Western end of the sector, and almost at once slammed into action. A couple of low-flying Hanovers came out of the northeast, protected by a group of

six Fokkers a thousand meters above them. The Spads plunged to the attack boldly, one going down after the two-seaters while the rest rushed upon the escort. For a few moments it looked like a pitched battle.

But a formation of French Nieuports, sighting the affair from the east, dashed over to join in, and the Boches found themselves badly outnumbered. The Hanovers scuttled away over the low hills, and the Fokkers, after a brief skirmish, scattered into flight.

The Spads, knowing the folly of a long stern chase into enemy country, circled back into formation,—all but one. In exchanging long range bursts with one of the Boches, Dave had caught a glimpse of a peculiar marking on a dark-hued wing-tip. He was not close enough to be sure, but the mere possibility inflamed his hopes, and when that Fokker fled with the rest, he set out in pursuit.

After a long, full-motored slant to gain speed, the German plane levelled off to race into the north. For a long time Dave's Spad could not pick up any distance. He was too far behind to waste ammunition, and could only see the edge of the wing. But gradually the superior speed of the Spad on the flat began to tell. Foot by foot the gap shrank. The Fokker came back toward him, as if drawn by an invisible but inexorable string, until he could see the pilot glancing anxiously to the rear.

Finally, without warning, Dave let off a trial burst. He was much too far to center his target, but the hissing tracers scared the German into a turn. As the Fokker wheeled up in front of him, Dave got a good look at the top surface of its wing and saw that he was mistaken. That was not the letter Z he had been looking for, but only a botched effect where one square cross had been painted over a Maltese one.

He growled an oath of disappointment, and discovered at once that he was in serious trouble. The Fokkers, after scattering to flee, were now converging again, and he was in the middle of them. His own comrades had not noticed his actions, for the Spads were nowhere in sight. He was alone, deep in Germany, with half a dozen foes closing in, and the fact that it was his own fault made his situation no less perilous.

The Fokker he had been chasing now turned on him abruptly. When he wheeled and zoomed for altitude, he found that he was already cut off. Two Boches were slicing between him and the lines, and a hail of bullets from above forced him down again. He whipped through a wing-over, and met his first antagonist with a chattering volley, but another closed down upon his tail and he had to whirl or die.

Dave fought as he had never fought before. The tremendous odds against him, the sight of leering black noses and sputtering Spandaus whichever way he turned, only seemed to redouble his courage. But six to one is more than mere fighting spirit can conquer, and it was only his amazing quickness on the controls, coupled with a lucky accident, that brought him through alive.

With German slugs rattling through his cockpit from two directions at once, he whipped into a short side-slip. Jerking out, he dodged a blast by nosing up into a sharp zoom. The zoom started all right, but almost immediately the Spad was stalling, and he saw that his exhausts had stilled to a soft sputter. He must have hit the throttle with his hand, for it seemed to be closed. Sliding off into another slip, he seized it and tried to pull it open. It did not budge.

He pulled again, harder. The motor continued to idle. What the devil was the matter? With both feet braced against

the rudder, he tugged at the throttle with all his strength. The lever, forged from annealed steel, bent a little. That was all.

He angled out of the side-slip with the ground coming up, a few hundred feet away. His motor was still idling smoothly, apparently unharmed, but nothing he did would make it run faster. He cursed bitterly. Without full power, he could fight no longer, could not even stay in the air. He was going down in a whole ship, helplessly, and felt no better about it because the Fokkers had ceased firing at him. Obviously they thought that he was surrendering in a funk, rather than die fighting.

Still cursing and jerking at the jammed throttle, he landed the Spad in a long narrow field that lay next to a straight road. The ground had seemed deserted as he glided toward it, but before his wheels stopped rolling fifty gray-clad sprang from the ditch by the roadside and he was surrounded before he could lift a finger.

Seeing him land safely, two of the Fokkers tried it after a few minutes of circling low. One overshot a little, and ended with one wheel crumpled in the ditch; the other three-pointed perfectly. The two German pilots spoke to him only curtly; plainly they were more interested in his plane than in himself. They looked it over curiously; shortly they removed a hand-hole plate from the side of the motor cowl and were fussing around with the engine underneath. In a few minutes the motor roared loudly, as one of the Boches twitched the throttle open.

Dave flushed and bit his lip in chagrin as they pointed out to him where the trouble had been. A bullet, slanting through the cowl, had caromed off the throttle rod, bending it just enough to jam it in the closed position. From the cockpit nothing would make it move; but a little prying against the carburetor with the

barrel of a Luger had straightened out the kink, and the Spad was now as good as new!

A few minutes later Dave suffered an agony of shame as he saw a German flyer take off in his own plane and fly it clumsily across the ridge to the north, closely escorted by the Fokkers. The other pilot remained on the ground long enough to explain to him, "There will be an automobile here very soon, to bring you to our field, where we will have the pleasure of entertaining you for a day or two." Then he also took off, leaving Dave in the charge of an infantry lieutenant to wait for the car.

IT was an hour later when that car, after covering some five miles of dirt roads, swung through a barbed wire gate onto a large aerodrome and halted before a small, square shack. Everyone on that drome seemed to know that he was coming, for several groups of pilots dressed for the evening in full regimentals lounged about, and overalled mechanics peered at him from the tarmac.

Dave descended sullenly. He felt badly enough about being in German hands, and it made him feel worse to see his own Spad standing in front of one of those brown canvas hangars. He resolved that he would have absolutely nothing to say to these damned Boches.

He was led into a small office, where a ranking officer sat half hidden behind a broad desk, his medals glittering in the dusk. This officer proceeded to question him, first in German, then in English. Dave answered neither "Yes," "No," nor "Maybe." He didn't even pay any attention to the sense of the questions, so that he could not have told afterward what he had been asked. He maintained a stubborn, rigid silence.

The *Kommandant* finally became infuriated. "So, you damned Yankee swine!"

he snarled. "You call this being very clever, *hein?* You are making a fool of yourself, not of me. It is you who will suffer. We were prepared to entertain you like a gentleman for a short time, before turning you over to the prison train. But no,—you do not know how to be a gentleman. Very well. Your confinement will start at once, then."

Followed by a black scowl, Dave was pushed roughly from the room, and led to the rear of the building. As he passed the groups of curious pilots they eyed him closely, but he did not return their glances. A moment later he was shoved into a tiny room, hardly more than a closet, and the door was slammed and bolted behind him.

"To hell with them," he muttered, sitting on the floor with his back against the wall. "Entertain me,—in a pig's eye! They want me to sit at their mess and entertain them. Nuts! I'm no sideshow freak, I'm a prisoner of war, and I might as well begin getting used to it."

The hard-boiled *Kommandant* evidently felt the same way about things. He sent no dinner, no blankets, nothing. Dave finally dropped into a restless slumber, propped in the corner, since the room was too small for him to stretch out in any direction.

He was awakened by a gentle fumbling at the door. It opened, to admit the hazy gray light of dawn and a dim figure. When it closed again, it was too dark for him to see the visitor's face.

"Decker!" said a whisper. "You know me?"

Dave stared in surprise, but could recognize nothing. "No—"

"Dagmar Denkert," came even more softly. "Three days ago—"

"Hell!" growled Dave, recoiling. "Get out of here and leave me alone. You're the last man I want to see. I swore I'd kill you—"

"Wait," cautioned the shadow. "I knew you would feel that way about me, but first let me explain. I did not purposefully betray you."

Speaking in rapid German, he described exactly what had happened on his return to this field. When he had finished, Dave said curtly, "You expect me to believe that? No, I'm not a fool any longer."

The German shrugged wearily. "I knew you would say that, too. But I am prepared to prove my word to you. Just as you proved yourself to me, three days ago. Are you willing to take the risk?"

Dave drew in his breath sharply. A spasm of irrepressible hope gripped him. "You mean,—to try an escape?"

"Yes,—listen. Your own plane stands on the tarmac, ready to fly. Others are there, too, but no motors will be started until another half hour. All the pilots are in the mess, eating; the *Kapitan* has his meals in his quarters. When I go outside, I will tell the sentry to go get his breakfast, that I will guard your door. Then I will lift the latch, when he is gone. I will slip across to the hangars, and tell the mechanics to start the Spad,—that the *Kapitan* wishes to try out the captured plane himself. As soon as you hear the engine start, dash out and run for it. From that point it is up to you; I can do no more."

Dave found his hand in the gloom, and pressed it vigorously.

"I ought not to believe you, but I do, somehow. I only wish—"

He would have expressed his gratitude, but the young German pulled away and slipped quietly out through the door.

From that instant Dave was on pins and needles. Was he again being betrayed into rash suicide, or was he really being given a chance for which he would willingly give his right arm? He could not know for certain, but anything was better than a prisoner's life.

He pressed his ear to the crack. He heard the brief mutter of conversation. Then a thump and a grate as the bar was lifted aside,—the soft *plunk, plunk*, of retreating footsteps. He tried the door with his fingertips. It moved freely, an inch. He waited with bated breath.

To Dave it seemed an hour, though it could hardly have been more than five minutes. Suddenly the roaring boom of a starting motor shattered the silence. He needed no one to tell him what that was! It was as different from the sound of a Fokker as night from day. He plunged through the door and ran at top speed.

For a brief period there everything was a fantastic nightmare. A high-pitched voice was yelling somewhere; evidently the thunder of those exhausts had startled others. He heard doors slamming open, and other feet besides his own, running. Rounding the corner of the building, he saw many Fokkers lined up on the tarmac, and his Spad was in the middle.

He redoubled his speed. There were two mechanics near his ship; they had not noticed him yet. He glanced around for his friend, Denkert, but could not see him, though he did catch a fleeting glimpse of a figure that dashed out from between two hangars. Then the nearest mechanic turned his head, just in time to meet Dave's driving fist.

The other one dropped his tools and ran in a funk; doubtless Dave's desperate expression terrified him. The Yank hurled himself over a prostrate form into the familiar cockpit. A shot rang out; that meant that he had been seen, and recognized. He seized the controls, and jerked the throttle wide. The Spad moved, but gained speed with heart-breaking slowness. More shots crackled behind him. At last his wheels lifted, and the ship staggered drunkenly into the air.

No sooner did he try to climb than he knew there was something wrong. He

found out immediately. The throttle opened about 90% full,—but not quite all the way! The cause was easily guessed. When that Boche fixed the rod, he had not taken time to straighten it carefully. Up to a point, it worked, and he had never known the difference. The ship would fly level, and climb slowly, but lacked the last 10% of full power.

AT first he shrugged, congratulating himself on being in the air at all, but soon he had misgivings. Heading south after a wide half circle, he looked back at the drome. There was terrific activity there; mechanics hustled about the ranked planes, and already he saw the shimmer of a spinning prop. Before he had put more than a mile behind him, a Fokker was rolling across the field toward a take-off.

Frantically he tugged at the throttle lever. No use! Not another fraction of speed could he get out of the Hisso. Working properly, a Spad could more than hold its own with a Fokker. But now the enemy plane, swinging sharply to cut him off, was gaining hand over fist. In less than a minute it was nearing his flank. Its guns spat a ranging burst, then it banked slightly, and he grated a curse of horror.

On its wing-tip he saw the letter Z!

Nothing else in the world could have roused him to such a pitch of fury and despair. The dirty, double-crossing swine! Not content with seeing him a prisoner, that Boche pilot had engineered this whole false escape for the purpose of feeding himself a slice of cold meat. The silk-tongued, treacherous devil! Doubtless he even knew about the sticking throttle rod, and knew that he would thereby have a great advantage.

"So you want to end it with a fight, do you!" snarled Dave through livid lips. "All right, you skunk, come on,—*fight!*"

It was like wrestling with one arm in

a sling. The Fokker whirled in quick swoops, rising in stiff zooms to regain spent altitude. The Spad sailed in wide banks, and its attempts to climb were pitiful. An Immelmann was out of the question; even a wing-over was slow.

At first the slashing volleys from the Spandaus only nipped at his wing-tips, or flitted harmlessly past the tail. But soon the Boche, finding his antagonist unable to meet him on even terms, grew bold.

Steel slugs, whining viciously, ripped Dave's fuselage to ribbons. A sharp-nosed bullet stabbed the exact center of his altimeter, showering his face with splinters of glass. Another creased his upper leg, to bring the warm blood spurt-ing into his lap.

A weaker man would have given up in despair, surrendered to his fate, and ended all in one last dive. Dave only grew more enraged. There was, he told himself, such a thing as justice. The gods would not let him die like this, at the hands of a lying rat! Doggedly, without hope, yet without fear, he somehow fought on.

When his left aileron crumpled under a withering hail of Spandau slugs his chance came. The Boche, thinking him now crippled beyond hope, pulled in close on his right, recklessly close. Sure that no one could execute a right bank without a left aileron, the pilot of the Fokker centered his sights unhurriedly, and set himself for the kill.

In the throes of desperation Dave tried something he had not done since early training days. He could not open his motor further, so he closed the throttle entirely. He could not bank with his stick, so he kicked the rudder hard and pulled up his flippers. The Spad hesitated, quivering. Then slowly it bucked, swinging into a *right-hand spin!*

For the first time since leaving the ground, Dave had a target before his sights. He did not let his first, last, and

only chance slip. His finger gripped the triggers frantically, and the twin Vickers ripped off a long savage burst. The Fokker fell in a sheet of flames.

As they lifted Dave from the shambles of his own cockpit, a quarter of an hour later, Major Wayne bent over him.

"I got him, Major!" croaked the pilot.

"For God's sake, get me a tourniquet!" cried the C. O. anxiously.

In the hushed dusk of that late afternoon Dave sat swathed in bandages* and splints gazing out through the window of the infirmary. His jaw was set, his eyes dull and listless. His experience seemed to have sapped all his spirit and left him with only disgust and disillusionment.

A faint hum drifted from the sky. It quickened,—grew to a loud roar. Men began shouting, running about outside. Dave craned his neck, and saw a plane sliding low. It was a Fokker, and just as the blast of its motor reached an ear-splitting crescendo, he saw a tiny white object flick from its cockpit and flutter slowly earth-

ward. With a diminishing drone it vanished quickly into the fading light.

It was some five minutes later when Major Wayne entered his room. The C. O. wore a peculiar smile. He handed Dave a slip of paper.

"You saw that message dropped?" he asked. "Here it is."

Dave's eyes ran quickly along the few scrawled lines.

Lieutenant Decker, 8th Pursuit:

I trust you arrived unhurt. The *Kapitan* von Marheidt took my plane, because it was the first on line. He will never fly again, as you must know. We, here, will not miss him greatly. In his absence I have already notified our Intelligence chief about the hospital, and steps are being taken. You and I, having paid our debts to each other, are again enemies. Shall we meet again? Who knows?

Dagmar Denkert

Dave could only sigh, and shake his head sadly.

THE END

Statement of ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of March 3, 1933, of Dare-Devil Aces, published monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1936. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Harold S. Goldsmith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Dare-Devil Aces and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. Editor, Harry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., Harry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner, and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. Harold S. Goldsmith, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of September, 1936. Edwin F. X. Silk, Notary Public, Bronx Co. No. 244, Reg. No. 76-S-37. Cert. filed in N. Y. Co. No. 183, Reg. No. 7-S-113. Cert. filed in Kings Co. No. 28, Reg. No. 7113. Cert. filed in Queens Co. No. 1400, Reg. No. 5851. (My commission expires March 30, 1937.) [Seal]—Form 3526—Ed. 1933.



Conducted by Nosedive Ginsburg

AS YOU enter the Hangar for this month's meeting, my dear Cloud Clowns, I would appreciate it very much if you were to brush off the crumbs and manage to look respectable. Naturally I would not make such a request unless the occasion called for it, since everyone knows that I love you just as you are, and would not, ordinarily, intrude upon your daily habits. But that long haired old geezer in the corner is no less a dignitary than my old man, Commodore Ginsburg, a first rate gentleman who merits your full respect.

When the Commodore was attached to the Irish Navy, he was known far and wide under the affectionate name of "Pelican-puss," for reasons which should be obvious to all. It's funny how I happened to meet the old man, especially after twenty long years, and it only goes to show what a small world this really is. The Commodore lost his attachment for the Irish Navy it seems, soon after they caught him pilfering the paint off the side of a battle cruiser and mixing himself a drink or two. They didn't mind so much the loss of the paint, for in time it would fall off anyhow. They did mind, however, when he set off the Navy's finest guns in celebration of the 4th of July and nearly sank the entire merchant marine just to show that he was an enthusiastic American. It was decided after a conference between my old man and the heads

of the Irish admiralty that Commodore Ginsburg might find his fun elsewhere, and so it was that the Commodore set off on his new adventures.

By this time, the fame of his son Nosedive had spread to the far corners of the earth, and everywhere the sea-faring old Pelican-puss would go, he would hear spoken in aweful tones the name of Nosedive Ginsburg. Proud and happy at this turn of events, the old man set off towards the Hangar.

It seems, however, that father, with his long maritime training, had grown so used to the "stowaway" practices that have distinguished his career, that he didn't know how to enter the Hangar through the door. Clever little guy that he is, old Pelican-puss had himself smuggled in, by hiding within a ton of oats only recently arrived to satisfy the strange appetite of Louie, the Lush. Louie, who is hungry at all times and much given to nightmares, awoke not so long ago and prowled through the dark in search of a bushel of oats.

I was brought abruptly out of my slumbers by a fog-horn voice that had, to put it mildly, the same soothing quality of a horse with a cold. I switched on the light and beheld the Commodore holding his toe, one of his toes, for the Commodore has ten. Louie, the Lush, on the other hand was holding his jaw, having broken one of his major molars in his attempt to nibble on my old man. Pelican-puss, if I

haven't already mentioned the fact, is one tough sailor, having to his credit a five round kayo over Popeye the sailor, so you may draw your own conclusions.

Therefore, having no other immediate means of honoring my old man, I am appointing the Commodore as toast master of this month's meeting. He shall turn thumbs up or thumbs down as the bums parade by, and should his decisions befuddle you sky geese, you'll know that the Commodore's been drinking again.

We have, to begin with, a clever communication from that Master Maniac, R. J. Lippert of Alma, Michigan. Lippert it was who brought forth the wrath of Charlie Piedra and was directly responsible for "Aeronea" one of aviation's immortal songs. Mr. Lippert has set his letter to a whacky rhythm which has taken some moments to decipher. However, with a careful touch here and another there, it is possible to set his poetry before you. If you can stand it I guess my old man can, too. Lippert goes like this:

Dear Ginsburg:

'Tis early morn, I've just awoke,
To find again that I am broke.
The dollar you sent to me is spent,
And I'm not sure just where it went.

My pocketbook has lost its heft,
And I have only three cents left.
But that will scarcely my style cramp—
'Tis just enough for a postage stamp.

I have pencils, a sheet of paper or two,
So I'm going to send some pictures to you.
And with this poem you will find
A prize-winning masterpiece of mine.

And I'm sure that Louie will agree
That you should send a buck to me.
Besides you'll notice, if you've a brain,
That the drawings bear a master's name.

And I'm sorry that I haven't time,
To jump on Piedra in this rhyme.
So just ignore that screwy dunce—
I'll take care of him in a couple of months.
So here's my drawings, and with luck,
Perhaps I'll win another buck.

R. J. Lippert.

You will note that Member Lippert speaks of a drawing. I have already shown this drawing to the Commodore

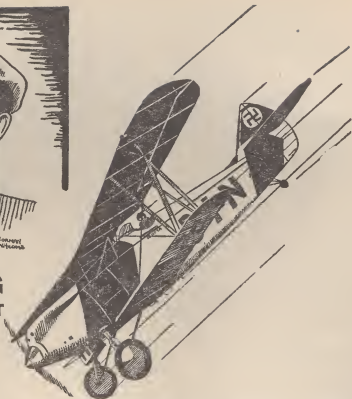
whose immediate reaction was a rush to the defense of the Ginsburgs. It's much too lousy to be given consideration, but is, nevertheless, of a very offensive nature. Old Pelican-puss has promised to take it out of Lippert's hide on his next visit to Michigan, but for the excellent poetry, he is in favor of awarding Lippert a buck. I asked him why, and the old gent said he merely wants to get a rise out of Piedra, so that in some future meeting that wild New Orleans Mudhen can really pop off and cause some excitement. So much for Lippert. Lead him out, Louie, and don't break off more than an arm or a leg.

In response to the many, many requests about the affairs of Ginsburg's one man football team, in other words, Louie, the Lush, let me say that it is coming along nicely. One difficulty has arisen in the course of the training grind, and that is how Louie is going to pass the ball to himself from center. Therefore we have decided to make it a one and a half man football team, with Louie playing ten positions and Charlie Piedra playing center. If he tried hard enough, Louie could doubtless play center too, but the big idea is to get Piedra to bend over the ball. Once in that position, Louie will take care of Mr. Piedra by hoisting him in the pants with his mighty hoof and giving Piedra some of that necessary flying time free of charge.

And now we must return to the grim business of the Hot Air Club. We have had, throughout our illustrious history, many amazing personalities, who were, in their proper turn, appointed to head that remarkable organization, the ACES OF THE SOARING WINDBAG. I offer my candidate for this month for the old man's approval. Do not be shocked that it is a lady, for women have astonished us before, and will again, just so long as the world exists. And it also goes to show what a democratic, impartial and splendid fellow Ginsburg really is, when he is



GOERING THE IRON FIST of GERMANY



Presenting Hermann Goering, Hitler's right hand man and number one tough guy on the continent of Europe. We don't think so much of Herr Goering, and would not be surprised if Louie, the Lush, pins back his ears one of these days. But

as a matter of historic and aeronautical history, Goering was once one of Germany's greatest Aces, having to his credit no less than 21 Allied ships. He is at present the head of the entire German Air Force and booster for the recreated Richthofen Circus.

broad-minded enough to leave himself open to the following abuse. It comes from Miss Kathleen Farnum, of 68 So. Maine Street, Penacook, New Hampshire, and it goes like this:

Hello You Monkey Face Farce:

When I started to read your bunch of hoocy, I thought I was reading something. But after I read it I decided I would stick to the advertisements, because your junk ain't what it's cracked up to be. Still I suppose I have to expect as much from a guy that's as soft in the knob as you are. You're worse than castor oil, sour milk and rotten eggs and a kick in the pants all taken at once. I could think of a lot more things you are worse than, you fish face nincompoop. But I'm not the kind to insult a lousy nothing like you are, you incurable pain in the neck. Hoping you die a miserable death,

Your worst enemy,
Kathleen Farnum.

eyes how you feel about this dishonor, this injustice to us Ginsburgs. You know and I know that what Katie says is said in malice. And you know as I know that Louie the Lush can lick any eight guys in Penacook, New Hampshire. And we won't be so rude as to ask, "Where the hell is Penacook, New Hampshire?"

But since it is a fixed policy with the Hot Air Club, Pop, to find the proper screwball, male or female, for the Windbag Aces, we are obliged to appoint Kathleen as this month's temporary C. O. Also to grant her a buck. Bear in mind, my good woman, that you are being honored only that you may see in action the true Ginsburg generosity. Let us by our gentleness lead you into the light, and when

Yes, Pop, I can see by the mist in your

next you are inclined to insult poor Ginsburg, at least do it with a certain amount of skill. Louie, you may have the next dance. We don't hit ladies.

Fortunately there are gentlemen left in this world who rise up at crucial times like this and sooth the anger that mounts within me. Such a party is Norman Witcomb whose work you have beheld before. Norman lives on Sheridan Boulevard in Mount Vernon, New York, and may he also live through a long and happy life. Free is Norman of the threat of the Lush, since he has never walked on Ginsburg's corns; free too is Norman of wordly woes, because his heart is clean. Maybe his work is staring you in the face, or else you'll have to turn a page or a handspring or something to see it. I never know when I write this masterpiece just where the hell they're gonna hang the art gallery.

In any case you will learn that Norman has chosen a current topic, and if you pay strict attention it is possible that you will learn something, although not very likely, I must admit. Mr. Witcomb has chosen Herr Hermann Goering, Germany's aviation chief and Hitler's right hand man and everybody else's pain in the joints for his topic. Most of you must have seen Herr Goering's photo many times in the newspapers, and you may be inclined to protest that Norman's likeness is much too lean—that Herr Goering is really a beefy guy whose neck folds many times over his collar.

I hasten to tell you that Norman's drawing is of Herr Goering when he was young, and flying for the Vaterland on coarse bread and beans. Knowing personally, what the guy looked like then, I can assure you that it is a splendid likeness.

Old Pelican-puss Ginsburg, the Commodore to you monkeys, says that he is mighty pleased with the work of Norman Witcomb. He insists, as a matter of fact,

that I award Norman the grand prize of five bucks. And knowing the old man as I do, I am not inclined to fool around with his decisions. Norman, the pound is yours.

Mr. Melvin Howland of Middle Falls, New York, along with a threat to open up my classic skull, has sent a large slice of poetry. It is not very bad poetry, though bad enough, and I am inclined to award the lad one buck. The Commodore is asleep by now, so we won't have to worry about his decisions.

Howard Love, which is, come to think of it, a strange tag for a member of this Homicide Hangar, lives at 617 No. 6½ Street, but a fraction removed from No. 7th Street, in Terre Haute, Indiana. For all I care Mr. Love can stay there, or else he can come to the Hangar and give us more of his first rate art work. He draws airplanes with terrific talent, and he is therefore given one dollar cash. (Poor Ginsburg must always pay cash, since nobody trusts him.)

The last of the Lucky Lunatics is Mr. Walter Higgins, Boston Post Road, New York City. Walter's a poet and may Louie have mercy on the guy. Thus we part, my fine friends, but there is always another day. And another day and another. A helluva way to make a living.

So long!

Nosedive.

THE HOT AIR CLUB

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January

Sign me up quick! I like these stories best:

1.
2.
3.

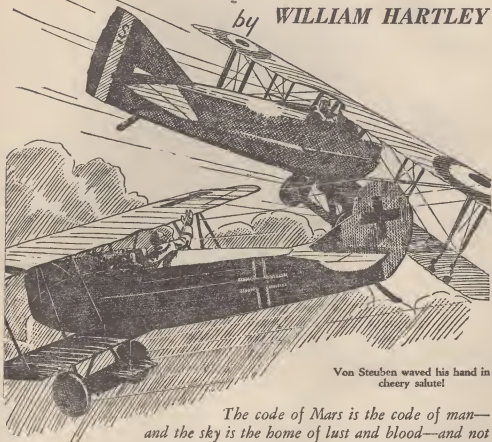
Name

Street

City

Gentlemen Eagles

by WILLIAM HARTLEY



Von Steuben waved his hand in cheery salute!

*The code of Mars is the code of man—
and the sky is the home of lust and blood—and not
of gallantry! But here were two who broke each rule of
Death and played the game—as gentlemen!*

EVERY muscle in his body tensed, Jerry Hawks, C Flight skipper of the 15th Pursuits, hauled the stick way back to his stomach and sent his Bently powered Camel wing screaming up in a gigantic loop. At the top he half rolled over and cut straight down on the jet black Fokker. Eyes narrowed, he squinted through the ring sight and slid both thumbs up to the trigger trips.

"Three strikes and out, von Steuben!" he muttered. "This is my day, and it's been a long time coming!"

As he spoke the last, he jabbed both trips forward—but nothing happened.

Neither gun so much as spat out a single bullet. Tearing his eyes from the ring sight he glanced at the loading handle of each gun and groaned aloud. Both were at an angle that indicated split cartridge cases, or over-sized bullets. At any rate, both guns were hopelessly jammed.

In the excitement of the moment he raised his free fist and savagely pounded the loading handles, before he realized that it would get him nothing. And, perhaps a more important realization—that von Steuben was spinning around to come tearing in at him from the side. In the last split second of time allowed he boot-

ed rudder, and slammed the stick over. Wings virtually groaning in protest, his plane whirled in a dime turn, then went streaking off into the clear.

All the time, though, he pounded and tugged and pulled at the loading handles in a desperate effort to clear the jam. Fate laughed at him, and he gave it up in disgust. The only thing left for him to do was to try and outfly the German pilot until he could get the chance to scoot back to the safety of the Yank lines.

That death was chasing around after him didn't matter a thing. In fact, he was too mad to give that angle a single thought. For weeks, he had hunted the famous German ace. And now that he'd found him, his guns had up and gone cockeyed on him. Damned if he wouldn't have the armament officer's hide when he got back to Fifteen's field! Yeah, and he'd—

He cut off the rest of the thought with a sharp curse. The German was not trying to get on his tail. Matter of fact, von Steuben had cut in on him from the side, and was waving a gloved hand in cheery salute! Two seconds later the Fokker banked again, and went prop clawing off toward the east. In a flash Jerry realized what it was all about. Von Steuben had seen that his guns were useless, and obviously elected to postpone the showdown until another day.

"Come back here, you bum!"

Unconsciously Jerry bellowed the words, and waved frantically after the retreating plane. But the only reply he got was for the German to waggle his wings just before he plowed into a cloud bank and disappeared. Burned up by the show of sportsmanship on the part of von Steuben, Jerry went tearing into the clouds after him to scrap it out, guns or no guns. It was just a waste of gas and oil, however. After thirty minutes of fruitless searching, he flew back to his

own lines, crossed over then and went southwest toward his home drome.

When he landed, his anger hadn't even begun to simmer down. Jaw stuck out and fire in his eyes, he headed straight for the gunnery hut. Bert Barrows, gunnery officer, as well as A Flight Leader, glanced up from a belt he was loading as Jerry barged in through the door. Instantly, he put up a silencing hand.

"Don't say it, sweetheart!" he called out quickly. "I can guess. Your guns jammed on you. Well, don't blame me. You loaded your own guns last night, after the binge. Remember? Didn't I say I'd do them for you this morning? But you were just tight enough to be stubborn."

In a flash the anger disappeared from Jerry's face. He pulled up short, blinked a couple of times, then grunted.

"Damned if I didn't!" he sighed, and sank down on a stool. "You're right, Bert. Nuts! Maybe I should go on the wagon until the war's over."

"That would be no fun," Barrows grinned. "But why so steamed up? There'll be Fokkers around tomorrow."

"Yeah, but maybe not von Steuben!" Jerry growled. "He was the guy I was piling down on. And guess what? The tramp saw that my guns had jammed, and he pulled out and went home!"

Barrows shook his head and fished for a cigarette.

"Von Steuben again!" he grunted. "Why don't you forget that bird. You've been thinking of nothing but him for weeks. Can't you get it through your thick head that he's good? A half-baked kiwi like you isn't going to smack von Steuben down. That lad is on the top of the heap. Now, if I should run into him—"

The gunnery officer didn't finish the last. At that instant a familiar sound came to them both. It was the pulsating

roar of an over-revving Mercedes engine. "Fokker coming!"

The bellowing voice on the tarmac outside galvanized them both into action. As one they spun and raced outside. Jerry saw it first.

"By God, it's *him*!" he barked. "Look! Up there to the right!"

There was no need of his pointing. Barrows, as well as every pilot and mechanic on the tarmac, had spotted the jet black Fokker streaking straight down toward the center of the field at whirlwind speed. But, when the plane was still a few hundred feet up, it suddenly eased out of its wild dive and went curving around to the left. For a moment the helmeted figure in the pit seemed to half rise up. Then he took a long squatty object in his hands and tossed it over the side. It dropped like a rock, hit the dead center of the field and went spinning end over end for several yards before it skidded to a full stop.

"Look out! It may be some kind of a bomb!"

BARROWS shouted the warning as Jerry Hawks started sprinting out onto the field. But the C Flight leader paid no attention and kept on running. After a second or so the others started after him. They reached the object in a group and stared down at it speechlessly for a moment. It was an old German aerial machine gun, somewhat the worse for wear—particularly after a drop of some four hundred feet or so to the ground.

The gunnery officer got the idea instantly, and his hooting laugh sent the blood rushing into Jerry's face. And a few seconds later, when someone found a note attached to the gun, Hawks was fit to be tied. It was printed in pencil, addressed to the pilot of plane 10, and read:

Sorry we couldn't finish it. I'd suggest that you bring this along next time, in case the same thing happens again. However, I hope you won't force me to be the gentleman again.

Sportingly yours,
Baron von Steuben

"Boy, oh boy, is that one for the book!" Barrows howled and thumped Jerry on the back. "Von Steuben, the gentleman ace! Hot diggity, has that guy got a sense of humor!"

Jerry made no comment for several seconds. Standing straddle legged, with arms akimbo and clenched fists on hips, he glared down at the ancient weapon.

"The gentleman, huh?" he presently snarled. "Wait 'til I meet that tramp again. Just wait!"

"We won't live that long," Barrows chuckled. "Come on, let's have a drink and forget it."

"Go to hell!" Jerry growled, and pulled his arm away. "I'm on the wagon until I get that guy. And right now I'm going to fix those damn guns of mine."

Barrows shrugged, and grimaced.

"Okay, sweetheart, I'll give you a hand. But if you want my opinion, you'll be on the wagon a long time."

"Yeah?" Jerry echoed sullenly. "That's what you say! Listen, wiseacre, I've got two hundred francs that says I'll get von Steuben the next time we meet."

Barrows peered at him closely.

"Serious?" he asked. "You wouldn't fool a pal, would you? I'm tempted to take that bet. How long before you pay off, one way or the other?"

Jerry spoke before he realized what he was saying.

"A week!" he snapped. "One week from today you pay me two hundred francs, or I pay you. Fair enough?"

"Perfect," the other chuckled. "Except for one thing—you've got to produce proof. I'm not paying out hard earned cash on just your say-so, you know."

"Okay!" Jerry nodded savagely. "You'll get proof enough. It's a bet!"

And so the bet was made. Each produced two hundred francs, and the C. O. of the squadron was selected as stakeholder. Five minutes after that had been accomplished, Jerry went to work with a vengeance. On the first day he spent fourteen solid hours over on the German side hunting for Baron von Steuben and his jet black Fokker. On the second day he straffed the German's drome three different times as a challenging gesture to the famous ace to come up and fight it out. But he didn't spot hide nor hair of the man. On the third, fourth and fifth day he was in the air practically from sun-up to sun-down. Twice he ran into Fokkers and had a scrap. He even shot down two planes, but neither was von Steuben's ship so it didn't count.

And then, in the early afternoon of the sixth day his dream castle came down in a heap of small stones. It was none other than Bert Barrows who brought him the news. A mile-wide grin was on the gunnery officer's face as he barged into Jerry's hutment.

"I'll settle for fifty francs, if you want to call it quits, now!" he announced.

"There's still a day and a night left," Jerry growled doggedly.

"Sure!" Barrows chuckled. "But wait until I tell you the news. Your gentleman ace pal isn't around any more!"

Hawks stiffened, and his jaw sagged open.

"What?" he yelped. "You mean that —"

"Oh, no!" Barrows broke in hastily. "He isn't dead. He was transferred to the French Front, down South. And get this—he's been there for five days! Ain't that something, huh?"

Hawks sat down slowly on the edge of his bunk. Then suddenly he cocked a suspicious eye at Barrows.



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Dare-Devil Aces

"You're kidding!" he growled. "Just want to hedge on the bet, huh?"

The gunnery officer made cross marks on his chest with a forefinger.

"Hope to die, I'm not," he said. "I read it in a Wing bulletin, not over ten minutes ago. It's in the C. O.'s office. No fooling. Go read it yourself, if you want. Boy, oh boy, straffing hell out of his drome for five days, and the guy wasn't even there! Well, I'll admit you tried hard, Jerry old kid. Not your fault, any way. Hot diggity! Two hundred francs to the good!"

JERRY made no comment. Disgusted and fed up, he sat slouched on the edge of his bunk and sadly visualized two hundred of his francs floating away on the wings of a lost cause. A little over twenty four hours to go, and von Steuben was down south in front of the French. Only twenty-four hours left, and

He suddenly killed the thought and leaped to his feet.

"Does that bulletin say where his squadron's located?" he snapped.

"Sure," Barrows replied. "He's in front of the Besancon Sector near the Swiss border. Hey—where you going?"

"Places!" shouted Jerry as he raced out of the room. "And keep your fingers off that dough! There's still twenty-four hours before the Major pays off. Maybe I'll still collect!"

"You're crazy!" Barrows called after him. "It's a hundred and fifty miles to Besancon! You can't—"

But Hawks didn't wait to hear the rest. Bolting out of his hutment, he headed straight for the tarmac. Two minutes later he was in the pit, carefully scrutinizing a strip map of the Besancon Sector, while his engine warmed up. And at the end of ten minutes he was in the air and racing southward at top speed. For

a solid hour and a half he flew a crow-line course southward. Then, when he spotted a French drome, he glided down and landed.

It took him half an hour to convince the French commanding officer that he was lost and low on gas. The Frenchman believed the story, or else he was just glad to be rid of the wild-eyed man who dropped down on his field. At any rate, he issued orders for Jerry's tank to be filled. And finally the Yank took off and headed straight for the front lines.

Never having flown over that section before, he had to check all land marks carefully with his map. Unfortunately, though, French and German guns had blasted many of the land marks to powdered ruins, and by the time Jerry reached the lines, and German archie gunners started slamming shrapnel up at him, he was hopelessly and completely lost.

However, he knew that he was somewhere over the Besancon Sector, and that was all that mattered. Easing the throttle back to the three quarter mark he began to circle slowly about, keeping a sharp eye on the surrounding sky, and another sharp eye on the ground below for the tell-tale signs of a German field.

And then, suddenly, without warning, Fate crossed him up. The hunted came down to the hunter! In short, a jet black Fokker swooped down out of a cloud bank, and it's pilot opened up on him with both guns. So suddenly had the plane appeared, and the attack been made, that for three century long seconds he could do nothing but sit frozen to the seat, eyes gaping upward. Then, as a sliver of strut flew off as though by magic and a neat cluster of bullet holes appeared in his right lower wing, he snapped out of his trance with a wild shout.

"You—you!" he bellowed, and flung one hand over the side and pointed to

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Dare-Devil Aces

the big white "10" painted on both sides of the fuselage. "It's me, Number Ten!"

As though the German had actually heard the words, the Fokker suddenly went arcing up in a gigantic loop, and dropped off the top into a wild power dive.

"Yeah?" Hawks echoed, and hauled back his own stick. "Think you'll trim me at my own tricks, huh? Not for two hundred francs you won't."

His Camel tearing straight up, Hawks jabbed both trigger trips forward and held them there. Through narrowed eyes he saw his tracers streaming between the wings of the diving Fokker. He tapped rudder until the tracers were bouncing off the Fokker's cowled engine. However, they only bounced for a split second or so. The German pilot "broke", whipped out of his dive and went arcing off to the right.

Quick as a flash Jerry spun his own ship around, and started closing in. In a thousand air scraps the German's maneuver would have been perfectly logical. But, this one time, it was the worst thing in the world he could do. Too late, he realized his mistake, and tried to reverse out of it. But, Hawks wasn't letting him get away with anything like that.

"Not a chance!" he roared, and kicked rudder hard. "Either quit, or take it!"

Obviously the German elected to take it. He whirled this way and that in a desperate effort to shake the Camel off his tail. But Hawks stuck to him like glue and sent warning burst after warning bursts zipping close by the Fokker's wings.

"Call it a day and head west!" he belowered into the roar of his engine. "I'm giving you a break, chump! I could drill your tank from here. Head—!"

He cut off the last as von Steuben suddenly rose half out of the seat, waved his hand in a token of surrender, and then

started to point off his left wings. Hawks greeted the motions with a harsh laugh.

"Want to lead me back to some of your gang, huh?" he jeered. "Nuts, try a new one. Head right, bum! I'm in charge of the parade now!"

As he roared the words he signalled savagely for the German to bank right but he didn't. Instead, he vigorously shook his head, made crazy motions with his free hand, and deliberately banked to the left.

"Damn you!" Hawks howled and spun left to head the Fokker off.

As he did he rapped a sharp burst toward the Fokker's tail. Too late did he realize what he had done. The German plane staggered sidewise, as though it had collided with a brick wall. The pilot managed to right it somehow, and then started wobbling downward in a flat glide.

Jerry groaned aloud, and cursed himself for a fool. A lucky shot from his gun had obviously parted an elevator control wire on the Fokker. The only thing the German could do was try to land before his ship fell into a spin. And that's just what he was trying to do.

"And on German ground!" Jerry moaned helplessly. "I smacked him down, but what have I got to show for it?"

AS though to find an answer to the question, he gazed gloomily at the surrounding heavens and the ground below. The heavens were filled with clouds slowly being tinted by a setting sun. And that was all. There wasn't so much as a smell of a French observation balloon, to give him the confirmation of the victory he needed. And as for the ground below, it was rugged, wild country without a sign of troops, or habitation.

But the fact that he spotted no German troops made up his mind for him. Reaching out his hand, he hauled back the

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Dare-Devil Aces

throttle and stuck the plane into a glide. "You'll be my proof, von Steuben!" he muttered. "Damned if I won't fly you back on the wing. Try to cheat me out of Barrows' dough, huh? A fat chance!"

Keeping close to the wabbling Fokker, he followed it down toward a small patch of more or less flat ground close to a thick woods. Giving the German plenty of room, he waited for the Fokker to settle before cutting down himself. But the Fokker didn't settle. Fate was still playing a hand in the game. A stiff cross wind caught the plane as it leveled off. Up went the German ship on one wing-tip, and then it knifed straight down into the ground and hit hard.

Tearing his gaze off it, Jerry concentrated on getting his own plane down. As his wheels touched and he looked over toward the Fokker, a sharp cry burst from his lips. The plane was a heap of wreckage and a thin streamer of smoke was curling up from under the engine cowlings.

"Fire! I've got to get him!"

He unconsciously shouted the words as he leaped from his still rolling plane and went rushing across the small field. The instant he reached the Fokker he started ripping the wreckage this way and that in a frantic effort to get to the pilot in the pit. It was only a matter of split seconds, but it seemed years to him before he was able to get hold of the unconscious German and drag him out. And only in the nick of time, too. As a matter of fact, he had hardly dragged the man clear when there was a loud hissing sound and red flame shot up from the crashed plane.

"Thank you, Herr Captain. You are a sportsman and a gentleman."

Jerry started and looked down at the man he'd placed unconscious on the ground a second before. Von Steuben's

eyes were open now, and he was smiling his gratitude. The Yank glared.

"If you hadn't been so stupid, there wouldn't have been all this mess!" he snapped. "Didn't you see me signalling to bank right? Thought you'd lead me into a trap, huh? Some of your gang around, I suppose?"

The German got slowly to his feet. Jerry watched him colselly, but the man made no attempt to draw his holstered Luger. On the contrary he jammed both hands into his pockets as he smiled wearily.

"You are wrong, Herr Captain," he said. "You did not realize where you were, *hein?* I was trying to lead my conqueror back to his own side. It was the sporting thing to do. But, now, it is a hollow victory for you. If you will look in back of you, you'll see what I mean."

"Huh?"

Jerry gulped the exclamation, moved sidewise and snapped his head around. Instantly he stiffened. A young army of soldiers was rushing out of the nearby woods. They wore greenish blue uniforms and funny three-cornered hats.

"What the hell?" he mumbled.

"You don't know them, *hein?*" he heard von Steuben ask. "They are Swiss Frontier Guards. You and I, my friend are through with the war. We will of course be interned until hostilities are over."

"Then—?"

Jerry started to speak, but the words stuck in his throat. Von Steuben smiled and shrugged.

"Now do you understand?" he murmured. "The frontier is close, here. During the fight we worked our way across it. We are not the first who have done that. It is too bad you did not allow me the honor of leading you back to the French lines. I am truly sorry. Yours was a splendid victory."

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27x4-40-87	2.30	84	27x4-41	2.30	84
27x4-40-87	2.45	82	27x4-41	2.45	82
27x4-40-87	2.60	80	27x4-41	2.60	80
27x4-40-87	2.75	78	27x4-41	2.75	78
27x4-40-87	2.90	76	27x4-41	2.90	76
27x4-40-87	3.05	74	27x4-41	3.05	74
27x4-40-87	3.20	72	27x4-41	3.20	72
27x4-40-87	3.35	70	27x4-41	3.35	70
27x4-40-87	3.50	68	27x4-41	3.50	68
27x4-40-87	3.65	66	27x4-41	3.65	66
27x4-40-87	3.80	64	27x4-41	3.80	64
27x4-40-87	3.95	62	27x4-41	3.95	62
27x4-40-87	4.10	60	27x4-41	4.10	60
27x4-40-87	4.25	58	27x4-41	4.25	58
27x4-40-87	4.40	56	27x4-41	4.40	56
27x4-40-87	4.55	54	27x4-41	4.55	54
27x4-40-87	4.70	52	27x4-41	4.70	52
27x4-40-87	4.85	50	27x4-41	4.85	50
27x4-40-87	5.00	48	27x4-41	5.00	48
27x4-40-87	5.15	46	27x4-41	5.15	46
27x4-40-87	5.30	44	27x4-41	5.30	44
27x4-40-87	5.45	42	27x4-41	5.45	42
27x4-40-87	5.60	40	27x4-41	5.60	40
27x4-40-87	5.75	38	27x4-41	5.75	38
27x4-40-87	5.90	36	27x4-41	5.90	36
27x4-40-87	6.05	34	27x4-41	6.05	34
27x4-40-87	6.20	32	27x4-41	6.20	32
27x4-40-87	6.35	30	27x4-41	6.35	30
27x4-40-87	6.50	28	27x4-41	6.50	28
27x4-40-87	6.65	26	27x4-41	6.65	26
27x4-40-87	6.80	24	27x4-41	6.80	24
27x4-40-87	6.95	22	27x4-41	6.95	22
27x4-40-87	7.10	20	27x4-41	7.10	20
27x4-40-87	7.25	18	27x4-41	7.25	18
27x4-40-87	7.40	16	27x4-41	7.40	16
27x4-40-87	7.55	14	27x4-41	7.55	14
27x4-40-87	7.70	12	27x4-41	7.70	12
27x4-40-87	7.85	10	27x4-41	7.85	10
27x4-40-87	8.00	8	27x4-41	8.00	8
27x4-40-87	8.15	6	27x4-41	8.15	6
27x4-40-87	8.30	4	27x4-41	8.30	4
27x4-40-87	8.45	2	27x4-41	8.45	2
27x4-40-87	8.60	0	27x4-41	8.60	0
27x4-40-87	8.75	0	27x4-41	8.75	0
27x4-40-87	8.90	0	27x4-41	8.90	0
27x4-40-87	9.05	0	27x4-41	9.05	0
27x4-40-87	9.20	0	27x4-41	9.20	0
27x4-40-87	9.35	0	27x4-41	9.35	0
27x4-40-87	9.50	0	27x4-41	9.50	0
27x4-40-87	9.65	0	27x4-41	9.65	0
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27x4-41	5.90	92
27x4-41	6.10	90
27x4-41	6.30	88
27x4-41	6.50	86
27x4-41	6.70	84
27x4-41	6.90	82
27x4-41	7.10	80
27x4-41	7.30	78
27x4-41	7.50	76
27x4-41	7.70	74
27x4-41	7.90	72
27x4-41	8.10	70
27x4-41	8.30	68
27x4-41	8.50	66
27x4-41	8.70	64
27x4-41	8.90	62
27x4-41	9.10	60
27x4-41	9.30	58
27x4-41	9.50	56
27x4-41	9.70	54
27x4-41	9.90	52
27x4-41	10.10	50
27x4-41	10.30	48
27x4-41	10.50	46
27x4-41	10.70	44
27x4-41	10.90	42
27x4-41	11.10	40
27x4-41	11.30	38
27x4-41	11.50	36
27x4-41	11.70	34
27x4-41	11.90	32
27x4-41	12.10	30
27x4-41	12.30	28
27x4-41	12.50	26
27x4-41	12.70	24
27x4-41	12.90	22
27x4-41	13.10	20
27x4-41	13.30	18
27x4-41	13.50	16
27x4-41	13.70	14
27x4-41	13.90	12
27x4-41	14.10	10
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At that moment the Swiss Frontier Guards arrived. In snatches of German, and broken English, they made it plain to Jerry that he was a "guest" of Switzerland until the fighting ceased. In the meantime they would both please accompany the Guards to their Commandant.

Feeling lower than ever, the Yank stared dully at von Steuben.

"No proof!" he muttered. "And that bum will collect the dough!"

Von Steuben looked puzzled.

"No proof?" he echoed.

"Yeah!" Jerry groaned, and blurted out the story in a few sentences. "But what's the use!" he finished savagely. "Maybe I rated this for being so dumb!"

"No," the German shook his head. "You were a sportsman and a gentleman not to shoot me down in cold blood. I will show my gratitude by helping you to collect your wager."

"Huh?" Jerry gulped. "How?"

"A simple matter," von Steuben smiled. "The Swiss authorities always report the identity of combatants they intern. I will sign an acknowledgment of your victory over me. The Swiss will see that it is delivered to your commanding officer. He can send you the money through the Red Cross. That will please you, yes?"

"Boy, oh boy!" cried Jerry as he grabbed the German's hand, and pumped it hard. "Was Bert Barrows right! A gentleman ace—and how!"

THE END



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20 REPRINTS 25c. Film developed, two prints each negative, 25c. SKRUDLAND, 4118-26 Overhill, Chicago.

Poem—Songwriters

Send for free copy of booklet revealing SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL SONGWRITING, free Rhyming Dictionary and market information. If you write poems or melodies, SEND FOR OUR OFFER TODAY. MMM Publishers, Dept. P1, Studio Bldg., Portland, Ore.

Songwriters: Interesting Proposition. Write: PARAMOUNT SONG-RECORDING STUDIO, L-7, Box 190, Hollywood, Calif.

SONG POEMS WANTED—Any subject. Send poem today for offer. RICHARD BROS., 30 Woods Bldg., Chicago.

SONG POEMS WANTED to be set to music. Free examination. Send for offer. McNeil, Bachelor of Music, 1582-A West 27th Street, Los Angeles, California.

Help Wanted—Instruction

FOREST JOBS AVAILABLE \$125-\$175 MONTH. Cabin, hunt, trap, patrol. Qualify immediately. Write Rayson Service, C-62, Denver, Colo.

Inventors

INVENTORS—Write for New Free Book, "Patent Guide for the Inventor" and "Record of Invention" form. No charge for preliminary information. Clarence A. O'Brien and Hyman Berman, Registered Patent Attorneys, 16-W Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

Detectives

DETECTIVE TRAINING, TEST PROBLEM METHOD. LOW COST. JOSEPH KAVANAGH, PP-17, HOBOKEN, N. J.

MAN AND WIFE WANTED!

To run local COFFEE AGENCY

Splendid Chance
To Make Up To **\$60⁰⁰** in a Week

If you are married and willing to cooperate with your life partner in operating a Coffee Agency right in your own locality, send your name at once for full details about my plan—FREE.

It is now possible for married couples to make up to \$60 in a single week if you can work harmoniously together. Wife handles the orders, keeps records, etc., while the husband delivers and collects. Steady, permanent business of one to two hundred customers can quickly be established if you follow the simple, proven plans that I send.

START EARNING AT ONCE

I'll send you everything you need—your complete outfit containing full-size packages of products, also printed forms, blanks, advertising literature, samples, etc., together with simple instructions for both the husband and wife, so you can start your earnings right away. Make as high as \$45.00 your very first week.

Everybody uses Coffee, Tea, Spices, Flavoring Extracts, Baking Powder, Flour, Cocoa, Canned Goods, and other foods every day. They MUST BUY these things to live. You simply take care of your regular customers right in your locality—just keep them supplied with the things they need. You handle all the money and pocket a big share of it for yourself. You keep all the profits—you don't divide up with anyone. Hundreds of housewives in many localities are waiting, right now, to be served with these nationally famous products.

I SEND EVERYTHING

Just as soon as I hear from you I will send you complete details—tell you all the inside workings of this nation-wide Coffee Agency Plan. I will explain just how to establish your customers; how to give them service and make good cash earnings. You can plan it so you give only 5 days a week to your business, collect your profits on Friday, and have all day Saturday and Sunday for vacation or rest. The plans I send you took years to perfect. You know they must be good because they have brought quick help to hundreds of other men and women, both married and single, who needed money.

FORD CARS GIVEN

Over and above the cash earnings you make I will give you a brand-new Ford Sedan as a bonus for producing. This is not a contest or a raffle. I offer a Ford Car—as an extra reward—to everyone who starts in this business.

YOU DON'T RISK A PENNY

You can start a Coffee Agency and make money the first week. You don't have to risk a cent of your own money. I absolutely guarantee this. No experience is needed. You use your home as headquarters. You can build your business on our capital. Full details of money making plans are free. Send your name today for the free book giving all inside facts, then you can decide. Don't waste a minute as you might lose this opportunity through the unnecessary delay. **ACT AT ONCE.**

ALBERT MILLS,

3714 Monmouth Ave.,

Cincinnati, Ohio



**NEW FORDS
GIVEN AS A BONUS**

WONDERFUL SUCCESS

Reported by Others

+

Clare C. Wellman, N. J., tried my plan and cleared \$96.00 in a week. Hans Coordes, Nebr., made \$27.95 in a day; \$96.40 in a week. Norman Geisler, Mich., reported \$33.00 profit for one day and as high as \$129.00 in a single week. Ruby Hannen, a woman in West Virginia, stated that she made \$17.00 in one day and \$73.00 in a week. Wilbur Whitcomb, Ohio, reported \$30.00 profit in a day and \$146.00 in one week. I have scores of reports of exceptional earnings like these as evidence of the amazing possibilities of this money-making offer.

Free Offer COUPON

ALBERT MILLS, President
3714 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

Send your free book telling how to start a local Coffee Agency in which a married couple (or single persons) can make up to \$60.00 in a week. We will read it and then let you know if we want to accept this opportunity.

Name.....

Address.....

(Please Print or Write Plainly)

Chesterfield Wins



Know the answer? So do I
These Chesterfields -

They Satisfy

SCAN COURTESY OF EXCITER

